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SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 628. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 12TH, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

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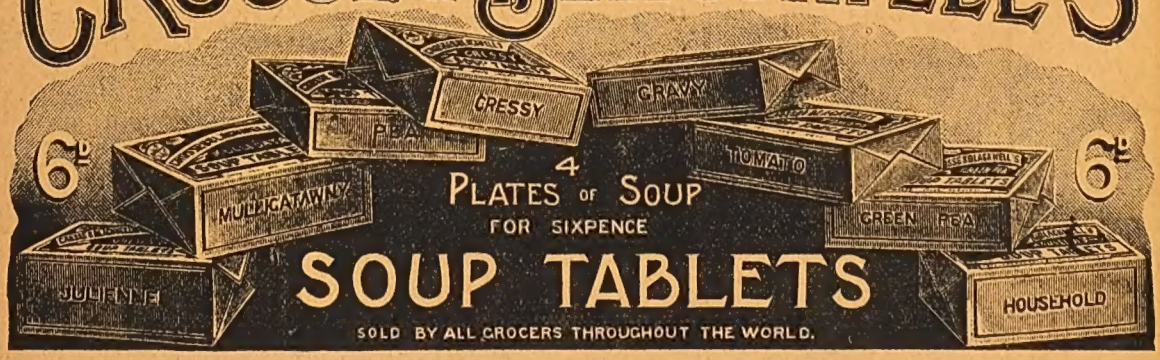

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 628.] For the Week Ending January 12th, 1901. [ONE PENNY.

UNDER ORDERS

IN a shabby ground-floor room, which contrived to do duty as study, dining-room, nursery, and general sitting-room of a Vicarage in the East End of London, sat, one afternoon in late autumn, a mother and son. That most pathetic form of poverty—the kind which is linked in indissoluble union with gentility—had stamped this nondescript apartment for its own.

The wall paper had seen better days, and had lighted on exceptionally dingy ones; the ceiling was blackened with gas; the carpet had lost all trace of its original pattern; the drugget was copiously darned in places, where a threadbare condition recorded the track of footsteps; the horsehair seats of the mahogany chairs were deplorably worn at the edges, and the position of a railway rug in the very centre of a forbidding-looking sofa suggested the idea that rents or stains probably lurked beneath its friendly shade.

Little folks had left marks of their presence scattered here and there in the room. On the sideboard was a pile of copy-books, dog's-eared primers, and story books, flanked by an atlas; from behind a sofa bolster peeped a scantily-attired doll, with solemn, staring, blue eyes, hectic cheeks, and a battered head, whereon bald patches alternated with flaxen ringlets.

The house stood in a plot of unproductive land—by courtesy called a garden—which apparently furnished a recreation ground for a number of hens, which at the present moment derived a strange enjoyment from occupying holes, which they had scratched for themselves, in the earth beneath some decrepit shrubs. Beyond the garden stretched the streets and lanes of Whitechapel. Ceaseless street cries, mingled with the rattle of wheels, and the jingle of tram-car bells. "Third Edition—ECHO," shouted, in shrill treble, a sharp-looking youngster, with a bundle of papers under his arm; "Six for sixpence—Cau-li-flowers," roared the deep bass of a costermonger; a dustman, a knife-grinder, a shoeblack, a cat's-meat man, a fish-stall keeper, and other members of the itinerant fraternity blended their voices in maddening chorus.

Within the Vicarage, mother and son, heedless of the distracting sounds, were engaged in earnest conversation. The mother, a middle-aged lady, with a careworn, refined face, diligently darned a small sock, which stood greatly in need of her services; the son, a young man of about three and twenty, with a slim, lithe figure, and a boyish, handsome, sensitive face, mechanically watched her flying needle as he listened or replied.

Mrs. Murray was wife of the vicar of St. Stephen's, Whitechapel, an elderly, scholarly, unsuccessful clergyman, whose means were wholly inadequate to meet all the claims made on him by a numerous family.

The son—David by name—had early developed intellectual tastes; his expenses at school and college had been defrayed by a wealthy, eccentric kinsman of his mother. The youth turned out shy, studious, and dreamy, the possessor of an enthusiasm for poetry, but of little practical ability, and of no instinctive knowledge of the world.

When with the attainment of the "Newdigate" and a good degree, his college career came to an end, and the time arrived when aid in the adoption of a calling would have been highly acceptable, the relation's assistance was capriciously withdrawn.

David Murray returned home, and doubt reigned under the paternal roof with regard to his prospects in life. His father shook his head dubiously when the young man bashfully professed himself a wooer of the muse, and expressed a desire to follow the vocation of a poet.

"Poetry doesn't pay, even when the writer is a genius, and—you are not a genius, you know, David," said the clergyman, with sorrowful candour.

Mrs. Murray belonged to a wealthy family who had taken umbrage at her marriage with a poor parson. Her brothers and sisters had consigned her to oblivion, and her name was omitted from her father's will. But a few days before my story opens, a sister, the widow of a fabulously rich East India merchant, named Wilton, held out the golden sceptre of reconciliation, and Mrs. Murray touched it with trembling rapture.

"We are sisters," graciously wrote Mrs. Wilton, from Florence, where she was spending some months, "and it is time to forget our differences."

From this exordium the widow passed to the narration

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of a family quarrel, which had indirect relation to the Murray interests.

"I am greatly disappointed," she wrote, "in my nephew Tom—poor James' son—who, till lately, managed my estates in Devon and Somerset. He has given me grave cause for displeasure, and I have shut my doors upon him. This being the case, I am anxious to make the acquaintance of your eldest lad, who has received no benefits from me, and from whom, therefore, according to the way of the world"—anger invested the writer's pen with unwonted sarcasm—"I expect the more gratitude. You have not yet, I suppose, seen your way to putting your son into any profession. Well, Tom's empty place, as steward, may in time and after due preparation suit him—who knows? I am resolved to like the lad; I even build castles in the air for him, and have in my head a scheme for his marriage with my husband's ward, Joyce Balfour, who lives with me and is my heiress. Send your son to Florence, to pass the winter here, and to return with us in the spring to Devonshire. Let him spend what time and see what places he likes *en route*. I inclose a cheque for his travelling expenses."

Consciousness of the pique (aroused by "nephew Tom") which obviously lay at the bottom of this letter, did not disturb the pleasure with which Mrs. Murray received her sister's overtures. She told herself, in her simple piety, that Providence had opened a way for the provision of her son; she called on David to rejoice with her.

But David refused to rejoice. On the afternoon when we find him in the Whitechapel parlour, his aunt's communication was under discussion, and his contribution to the conversation was flavoured with the spice of petulance. He was seated on a low chair, at his mother's feet, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, and his eyes fixed gloomily on the fire.

One clause in the letter—that relating to a possible marriage between Joyce Balfour and himself—had aroused his ire. The young man's ideal of marriage was high and pure; to have it rudely broken in upon with mercenary suggestions, and with the threatened interposition of a third person to regulate his choice, was to the last degree distasteful to him.

"Who is this Joyce Balfour, mother?" asked David, tossing aside the momentous letter.

"I know little more of her than your aunt tells us, dear; she was Mr. Wilton's ward, is rather younger than you, I fancy, and I have heard that she has considerable property. When she inherits my sister's estates, in addition to her own, she will be enormously rich. Your aunt"—with a slight pause and a wistful look in David's direction—"was always fond of match-making. If her fancy for an engagement between you two young people should be realised, your fortune would be made, David."

"But I don't want my fortune to be made—after that fashion," cried the young man hotly. "What do I know, and what do I care, about Miss Balfour?"

"She will be enormously rich," urged the mother, falling feebly back on her first point.

"I should be glad to know you were saved from a poor man's portion, David, for I have learnt by experience how hard it is to struggle against poverty."

The mother laid down her sock, and glanced appealingly towards the young man, who responded with a frown. David was young, and he had dreams of an affluent position, to be won, not by a mercenary marriage, but by literary achievements. But he could not brag of his spurs before he had won them; he grew silent.

"You are not a genius, you know, David."

"We have no right to assume, mother," he burst forth at length, his slumbering chivalry awakening to new life, "that Miss Balfour would accept the honour of an alliance with myself, even if I were inclined to offer it."

Mrs. Murray smiled. She took up her work again.

"Miss Balfour is probably aware," she said, as she stooped to re-thread her needle, "of your aunt's plans, and she must know that it might be greatly against her interests to oppose them."

There was another silence.

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"At least you will not decide in the matter till you have seen Miss Balfour, David?"

"No, I will not decide till I have seen her."

"And you will go to Florence?"

David rose, walked to the window and looked out. But he saw nothing; his thoughts were far away. Florence was a fascinating name to the untravelled lad; he wished that his errand there were not so unwelcome.

"Yes, I will go," he said slowly, "if I can reconcile myself to the thought that I am ousting my unknown cousin Tom from my aunt's favour."

"Nonsense."

The flying needle halted in mid-course.

"You are not ousting him; he has already ousted himself. Don't be quixotic, dear."

David sighed. His last hope of escape seemed dissipated.

Just at this moment the sound of fleet footsteps was heard; the door flew open, and three or four children, who had been passing—as marks of treacle on hands, faces, and pinafore testified—an agreeable half-hour in the kitchen, appeared on the scene.

Their advent was the signal for David's departure to his own room.

A few days later the young man started on his travels.

In the excitement inseparable from a first foreign tour, the object of his wanderings was almost forgotten. He went through the usual vicissitudes of a long journey. The usual important package was left behind, and its absence, as usual, discovered too late for recovery.

The usual countings of hand-bags and wraps were performed, and then the re-countings, to make assurance doubly sure. The usual sprightliness on boarding, and dejectedness on leaving, the packet, were duly experienced.

Then came hurried meals at railway stations, then views of monotonous French landscape, with its inevitable long straight rows of poplars, then glimpses of bolder scenery, of chalets, and of snow peaks, and then Switzerland burst upon David's view.

The young man had chosen the St. Gothard route; he had determined to avail himself of his aunt's generosity, and to linger over his journey; in a letter in which he announced his plans to her, he spoke of an intention to spend a couple of days at Lucerne, a few hours at Milan, and a week at Venice, the town which above all others appealed to his poetical fancy.

The lad revelled in his new experiences. His fellow tourists caught something of his enthusiasm; every day he made new friends, who parted from him at night with flattering reluctance.

Not only did the wonderful sights which met his eye delight David; in his young freshness he thoroughly enjoyed the importance of ordering beds and meals, or paying scores, at foreign inns. At last, Italy was reached; at last, Milan lay like a dream behind him, and one early morning found him sleeping fitfully in a railway carriage, and nearing Venice. At five o'clock he awoke, rubbed his eyes, opened the window and looked out.

The edge of a hand-bag, which had very poorly played the part of a pillow during the short night had left proof of its insufficiency in the cramped condition of David's neck. The young man was sleepy and cold; circumstances were not favourable to his first impression of the approach to Venice.

It was with some sense of dreariness that David found himself in a waste of water. Before him, behind him, and on either side, grey water stretched out, to meet a cold grey morning sky; no land was visible. He was on the bridge—nine miles long—which connects Venice with the mainland.

"Do you know whether there is to be singing on the Grand Canal to-night?"

In a short time the forms of towers and clustering houses began to reveal themselves against the horizon; the train whizzed on, and presently the city of the Adriatic lay, broad and clear, before David's eyes. The young man held his breath as he gazed. But a railway-station is the last place for sentimentalism, and before the platform of the Venetian railway-station the train came, in a few minutes, to a standstill.

"Romance hasn't a chance against its arch-enemy, steam," thought David, as he jumped to the ground, mustered a few words of stumbling Italian, embellished with French, and with their aid placed himself under the protection of a porter, a red-haired, well-built fellow, with a face like an old Venetian picture.

The Englishman's registered luggage was quickly collected and placed in a gondola; a herd of loafers—ragged, picturesque men and boys—swooped down upon him as fair prey; one seized his umbrella; another bore off his Murray and his macintosh; a third attempted—in spite of vigorous remonstrance—to relieve him of the light burden of a small paper volume of Howell's "Venetian Life," which he held in his hand. Before the station were a number of gondolas, their proprietors hailing passengers with deafening cries of "*Gondoli, signori. Signori, gondoli, gondoli.*"

"What hotel does the Signore command?" asked, hat in hand, David's gondolier, a weather-beaten old Venetian, with the manners of a duke.

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"The 'Angleterre,'" returned David with a series of nods; he guessed the meaning of the question.

Mrs. Wilton had furnished him with a list of hotels worthy his patronage in the different towns in which he was to stay.

Soon David was gliding on, along the Grand Canal, under the bridge of the Rialto, past the fruit market, with its wealth of grapes and pumpkins, beside world-famed Gothic or Renaissance palaces. He was in Venice at last—in Venice the city of dreams, and the whole scene had come upon him so suddenly that he failed to grasp the reality of his surroundings.

All that day—after his luggage had been deposited, and a bedroom secured at the "Angleterre," on the Riva degli Schiavoni—David spent in sight-seeing.

He wandered, half-dazed with the magnificence of its beauty, up and down St. Mark's, much pestered by assiduous guides, who, recognising his nationality, addressed him in a counterfeit of his own tongue; he visited the Doge's palace, rambled through the galleries, and crossed the Bridge of Sighs, into the Prisons; he lost himself in the intricate streets about the Merceria, and he strolled along the Piazza of St. Mark, listening to the afternoon band.

It was with a sense of a good day's work well done that he took his seat that evening at *table d'hôte*, stifled a hungry yawn, stretched his tired legs under the table and looked about him.

There was the usual Italian room, with its ugly wall-paper, its stove, and its painted ceiling; there was the long table, with its stiff central floral decoration; there was a glitter of gas; there was the sound of English predominating over every other tongue. The windows looked full on the Riva; a plaintive little face peeped in through the curtains, and a plaintive little voice solicited alms.

"Excuse me. Do you know whether there is to be singing on the Grand Canal, to-night?" said a voice in English in David's ear,

Something in the tone at once arrested and fascinated his attention. He looked quickly down to a face turned to his, and the blood mounted into his own face with a rush.

The propounder of the question was his nearest neighbour, a young girl, the owner of the most attractive face David had ever seen.

From beneath a mass of glorious red-brown hair looked a pair of the merriest, brightest blue eyes in all the world. The nose with its slight tendency to turn saucily upward, the dimpled chin, and the laughing mouth with its sweet red lips, made up a picture which dazzled and bewildered David.

"I—I—don't know," he stammered. "The ways of this place are strange to me; I only came into Venice this morning."

Then he bent over his soup, feeling strangely shy and embarrassed.

"Indeed. Do you intend to remain long?"

The girl's manner was, in its frank friendliness, a broad contrast to David's own. It was hardly, perhaps, the manner usually adopted by ladies in addressing a stranger of the other sex, but its fearless ease had in it nothing deserving the mysterious adjective "fast."

"About a week. I am going to Florence."

"To Florence!" The girl turned on David a rapid enquiring glance. "Why! I believe," she said, suddenly laying down her spoon and laughing an amused little laugh, "that I know who you are."

"Who I am?"

"Yes. How odd that I should have come upon you so soon. You are Mrs. Wilton's nephew, David Murray."

"Did you gain that piece of information from your fellow fairies?"

David had sufficiently overcome his shyness to venture on a tone of mild pleasantry, and some infinitesimal portion of the admiration which he felt found its way into his eyes.

"From no one more fairy-like than Mrs. Wilton herself. I am wintering in Florence with a friend, the lady opposite us."

David glanced across the table towards a pompous-looking dame, in a plum-coloured silk dress and a lace cap.

"And I know your aunt well. My friend and I are in Venice for a short holiday. Mrs. Wilton told us that you were coming to the 'Angleterre,' and I determined to look out for you. You wonder at my interest. Well, Mrs. Wilton told me, too"—in a tone of mock solemnity—"about Miss Balfour, and Miss Balfour and I happen to be great friends."

"What about Miss Balfour?" asked David, huskily.

Joyce had retired into the background of his memory; he was almost angry with this beautiful stranger for bringing her again into prominence. He had sent away his soup plate, half-empty, and he waved an impatient refusal to a waiter who approached with fish.

"Oh, you know," with a gay laugh. "You are going to Florence, in the character of a conquering hero, to carry off our heiress, Joyce Balfour."

The laugh nettled David. He coloured crimson.

"It pleases you," he said, crumbling his bread impatiently, and speaking under his breath, "to make merry at my expense. But you are wrong in your statement. I don't think myself a conquering hero. I am going to Florence at Mrs. Wilton's request, to make her niece's acquaintance—nothing more. Probably I shall not like Miss Balfour, very probably she will not like me. Mrs. Wilton has no right to make schemes for other people, without their consent, and then to proclaim those schemes as certainties to all the world."

"Dear, dear! she doesn't proclaim her schemes to all the world. How fiery you are! I am, as I said, a friend of the family; it's only natural that Mrs. Wilton should be a little confidential to me."

Then the subject of Miss Balfour was allowed to drop. But other subjects presented themselves and conversation was well sustained through the long dinner.

When at last the girl rose, turned to her neighbour with a bright little motion of the head—between a bow and a nod—and passed out of the room, in the company of the lady in the plum-coloured silk, who honoured the young man with a searching glance, David was astonished to remember how voluble he had been.

Now that his exertions were over, he wondered what to do with himself, and when he should see the friendly stranger again.

He hung about the reading-room; she was not there. He toiled up to his bedroom, looked up paper and pencil, and began a sonnet on a pair of blue eyes, left it unfinished and wandered out.

The moon was shining on the open water before the Riva degli Schiavoni; the fishing boats with their picturesque sails stood out in silver light. But David did not linger—as he once would have lingered—to dream over the scene; he hurried on to the frequented Piazza of St. Mark.

There he watched the crowds passing up and down,

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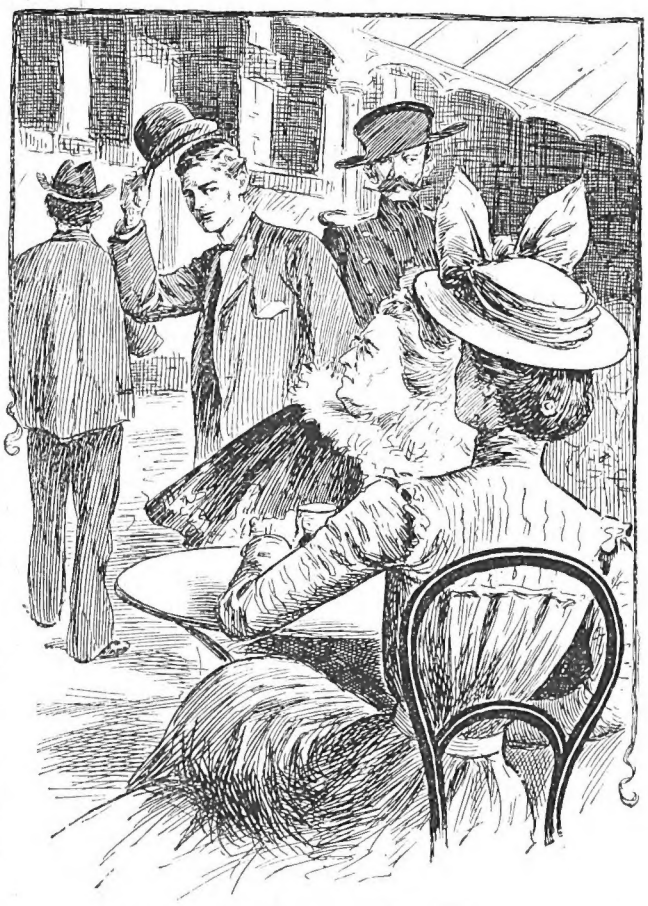
or seated outside the cafès, the officers with their jingling swords, the flower girls, the artists' models, the ladies, the newspaper vendors, the match boys, and the barefooted searchers for cigar ends. He did not tell himself that it was in search of one face that he scanned each group of promenaders or idlers.

But, as in passing one of the tables before the "Cafè Florian" he caught sight of the lady who had accosted him at *table d'hôte*, and who was now sipping coffee and talking with her friend, he felt somehow as if a long search had been rewarded. He raised his hat, and passed on, blushing like a girl when he received a responsive bow and smile.

Then he walked slowly back down the Riva to his hotel, sat up late over his sonnet, tore it up in angry discontent and fell asleep to dream of an animated face, and a pair of bewitching, bright blue eyes.

The days passed quickly. It was glorious autumn weather. Every morning David visited, in obedience to directions in his guide-book, some famous churches or palaces, or he made his way to the studio of a modern artist; every afternoon he followed his own sweet will, strayed along the narrow streets, listened to the voluble sellers and the deprecatory buyers at the shops and stalls near the Rialto, and tried his own inexperienced hand at a bargain, or perhaps he took a gondola and was rowed to the Lido, or some other island of the Lagoons, returning at sunset, when the gold and crimson of the sky were reflected in the water.



He raised his hat and passed on.

At *table d'hôte* he related his adventures to his neighbour, who interrupted him with merry questionings, and who sometimes, if she happened to be in a communicative mood, deigned to respond with narrations of her own doings.

All day long David looked forward to the *tête-à-tête* of the dinner hour. Every evening he went to the Piazza, and marched up and down in solitary state, his eyes continually travelling in one and the same direction, or he sought a table at the *café* where he could furtively watch his new friend, who was pretty sure to be in sight.

In his letters to Whitechapel he never once mentioned her. For one thing he did not know her name. Once, in a fit of more than ordinary curiosity, he had cursorily glanced through the list of names in the "Visitors' Book," but among them all how could he distinguish the one in which he was interested?

The ladies were known by the waiter fraternity of the hotel as *les dames du numéro vingt-cinq*, the number of their sitting-room. When speaking to his neighbour, David had often had at his tongue's tip a downright question concerning her name, but he had hitherto been too shy to utter it. He fully intended to be bolder, one day.

Meanwhile, in his verses—she had found her way into most of his verses written at this period — he chose, for some fanciful reason of his own, to call her "Hera."

It turned out that the length of the girl's stay in Venice was identical with David's; they were both to leave on the same day.

On the last evening in Venice, David and Hera found themselves walking together, and actually unaccompanied, along the Piazza. Mooning along in his usual fashion, the young man had happened to brush against the ladies; as both he and they were bound for the "Angleterre," it was natural that they should walk together.

But the elder lady of the company was presently pounced upon by an Italian countess, who insisted on monopolizing her attention. David moved on with Hera; he could hear a ceaseless stream of foreign-sounding English flowing on behind him.

A strange silence came over the young man. Intently—almost breathlessly—he watched his companion. She had drawn off one of her gloves; on one of her fingers was a ring, with a forget-me-not in turquoises. David wondered, with a touch of utterly unreasonable jealousy, whose hand had placed it there.

The silence seemed oppressive to the girl.

"Let us hurry towards the Riva, and see the moonlight on the water," she said. "Moonlight on water is the most correct of all Venetian beauties."

"Certainly."

David tried to shake off his taciturnity—to emulate his companion's gaiety. But the attempt ended in failure; he was obviously dull and miserable.

"Oh, the beauty of the evening—an evening never to

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pass from David's memory! How grand and solemn the Ducal palace looked in the moonlight! how still was the water, how sweetly came the sound of singing voices from the Grand Canal!

On the top of the steps of one of the many bridges on the Riva both walkers came simultaneously to a standstill.

"So this is our last evening in Venice!" said the girl, resting her arms on the top of the bridge, and looking musingly down into the water.

"Why do you tell me that? surely I know it," burst out David, savagely.

The girl glanced up, startled by the sharpness of his voice.

"What's the matter?"

"Ah me! *Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

"I beg your pardon."

"I beg yours; I was quoting Latin. What I want to say is that—that—the prospect of bidding you good-bye is—well—is the reverse of an enlivening one to me."

"How solemn you are," with a laugh. "And for no reason at all. We shall often meet again."

"Shall we?"

David leant his elbow on the top of the bridge; he bent his head down close to the girl's, her hair almost brushed his cheek.

"Of course," a little impatiently. "My friend and I go to Florence to-morrow, and, as I told you, I am a great friend of Mrs. Wilton's; and I look in upon her every day."

"But I am not going to Mrs. Wilton's."

David spoke in a suppressed voice; he did not raise his head.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say. I cannot go to her now. I had not been a day in Venice before I grew aware of that fact. But I could not—forgive me—resign the pleasure of staying on here with you. My expenses at Venice must be refunded—somehow—" with a grim smile. "You are going to-morrow; then I leave the same day for London."

"Good gracious!"

The girl raised herself from her stooping position.

"How changeable, and how incomprehensible you are! What has happened since you left home to change your plans so suddenly?"

"Everything has happened."

Half-mechanically, Hera had moved on a few paces, and David walked beside her; they descended the bridge steps and made their way slowly along the river.

"You know of—you spoke of—a matrimonial scheme for me which was the cause of Mrs. Wilton's invitation. When I left home I was free; it was at least possible that an introduction to Miss Balfour might, if my advances proved acceptable, end in the accomplishment of my aunt's scheme. Now, all that possibility is over."

"Why over?"

"I am not free now," cried the young man passionately. "Since I have met you I have learnt that Miss Balfour and I could never, at best, be more to each other than good friends."

An inscrutable expression came into the girl's face. She stood still and eyed her companion searchingly.

"Surely," she said, "if you oppose your aunt's plans, you will injure your prospects for life."

"Yes," answered David with simple candour. "My mother will be sorely disappointed; she had hoped so much from my aunt's new interest in me. I am sorry for my mother, but I don't fear the future for myself if ——" David broke off.

"Won't you wait till you see Miss Balfour, before you decide on opposing your aunt's views?"

"Why should I see her?" vehemently, "the very thought of Miss Balfour is hideous to me."

"And how shall you explain your change of plans to Mrs. Wilton?"

"Explain! I shall write and tell her the truth—shall say I have met you."

The girl's lips parted in a curious smile; she stood stock-still, facing David in the moonlight.

"Whom shall you say that you have met?" she asked, lifting her eyes suddenly to her companion's face.

"I—I—don't know; a thousand times I have wanted to ask your name. Will you tell it me now?" faltered David humbly.

"I am Joyce Balfour."

"To be sure. I am Joyce Balfour."

"Joyce Balfour!"

If a thunderbolt had fallen at David's feet he could hardly have been more astounded. If ever he were dumbfounded in his life, he was so at this crisis of his fate.

A merry laugh recalled his wandering wits.

"Yes, I am Joyce Balfour and Mrs. Wilton's ward; it is Mrs. Wilton with whom I am staying at the 'Angleterre.' I never expected to remain unknown to you so long; men are slow at guessing; a woman would have found us out long ago. Why, there were a thousand ways of learning our names, and I often wondered why you didn't ask me mine, downright. When we first heard that you were going to stay in Venice, I persuaded Mrs. Wilton to come over here and make your acquaint-

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ance under the rose. It was no more pleasant to me than to you, I can tell you, to be under orders in matters matrimonial to Mrs. Wilton. I was no more willing to accept your advances than you were to offer them. At least, I wanted, before we were formally introduced, to know you for myself, in my own way; to see you and talk with you when you were off your guard. It is of course for you to say"—with an arch glance in David's direction—"whether you will abide by your decision to return to England to-morrow. But at least, sir"—with a saucy smile and a bright look in the blue eyes—"you will please apologize very humbly for your assurance in stating before my very face that the thought of Joyce Balfour is hideous to you."

We suppose that David's apology proved an ample one. At any rate we know that a year after the events related in our story, David was not only installed steward of Mrs. Wilton's estates in Devonshire and Somerset, but that he was also married to Miss Balfour. The first volume of poems which he offered to the world had a dedication, "To my wife Joyce."

ANNETTE CALTHROP.

THE TWO BAMBOOS.

BY the side of the Bay of Yedo (as we are telling old stories we like to keep to old names) on a beautiful bank, ablaze with the colours of the azalea, the iris, and the camellia, grew two bamboo trees. The one was tall, lusty, and strong, the other was graceful, drooping and tender.

Said the stronger to the weaker:

"I should like to know what good you are. The smallest breeze makes you bend your head almost double and sigh with pain. Look at me! I don't care what wind blows or what storm comes from the sea. I can face them and feel better for it."

The slender bamboo at his side who was as modest and retiring as she was graceful and beautiful, replied:

"Yes, we are each suited to our vocation in life. You will be a stout coolie pole."

"Coolie pole, forsooth!" snorted her neighbour contemptuously. "Not I."

"And I," continued the slender bamboo, "I shall be used to decorate a house at the New Year festival if I'm to be used at all."

"Don't you count on that," roughly said the big bamboo; "they'll make you into mats, or a coolie's rain coat, or something or other low. Why, look here, you're fit for nothing else."

As he spoke a strong breeze came in from the sea and made the whole hillside quiver and sigh, all but the stout bamboo, who merely bent his head as much as to say:

"Go on, go on, it pleases you and doesn't hurt me!" whilst the poor little one at his side bent and swayed, and groaned heavily to see so many of her tender leaves swept away.

Time went on. The wood-cutters came.

"Orra! Orra!" they cried, "here's a fine fellow for Hinashi's junk; we'll get ten-pence for him!"

"Told you so," whispered the big bamboo to the little one. "Now for life! Hurrah! anything rather than stop on this monotonous old bank, spending the best years of one's life in listening to your groanings."

The axes were plied, and he fell with a thundering crash. Then he was stripped of his branches and shaped, and in a few days was sailing merrily over the blue waters of the bay, as happy as could be.

Meanwhile the slender bamboo grew more graceful and more beautiful every day, and the village children came to play under her shade, for they had learnt to love her, and called her their "Silver Spray."

One day there was a great hullabaloo in the plantation, such a whispering and chattering amongst the azaleas and camellias as had never been heard before, for the azaleas and camellias are enemies and rarely speak to one another.

"They're going to build a house here for the Prince of Tosa," replied the tree, "and we're all to be swept away."

"O, dear! O, dear!" said the bamboo, "that's a bad business; I wish I had been born stout and strong, and I would have been a junk mast instead of being carried away to heat baths."

And the next day the wood-cutters came and the work of destruction commenced. Down upon the sand were thrown the beautiful flowers and the graceful clusters of leaves; the little bamboo trembled as she saw her friends falling around her, and wondered when her turn would come.

At length the destroyers approached her, and one man was swinging his axe in the air to give her the fatal blow, when a chorus of child voices was heard:

"No, don't kill 'Silver Spray'! please don't!"

And the man dropped his arms, and she was saved.

The children dug her out and carried her to a beautiful garden, where they planted her on a bank overlooking the sea.

One day a dreadful storm arose. The blue water was churned into dark green mountains of waves capped with white foam; the wind blew furiously, and in all directions junks could be seen flying to the nearest point of shelter. It was a terrible time for all the trees and plants around, but the bamboo was sheltered by a high bank of purple iris.

Next morning the shore presented a woeful appearance, for it was strewn with timbers, and masts, and torn sails, and even dead bodies of men; and amongst the remains the bamboo recognised her big, strong companion of old days, badly bruised and cracked in many places. As the men dragged him up to the foot of the garden, he saw her and said:

"Ah! I wish I had been a coolie pole."

And he was cut up for firewood; but the slender bamboo flourished many years after, and when she heard boasting going on around her would often tell the story of her strong, lusty companion.

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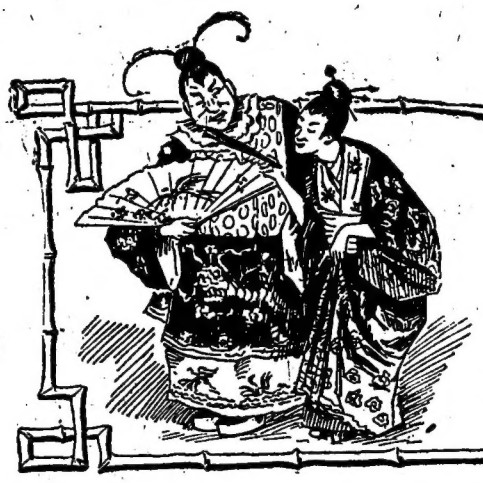

Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

XXXIV.—HE EXPERIMENTS WITH A BOON FOR ALL MANKIND.

AFTER dinner, during which he had seemed much preoccupied, Mr. Bowser had passed through the kitchen into the back yard and poured about two pails of water into an empty barrel. The cook looked at him suspiciously from the half-open door, and Mrs. Bowser wondered what he was up to, but nothing was said until he had taken off his shoes and settled down for the evening. He had been aching for ten minutes to be questioned when Mrs. Bowser observed:

"Are they going to shut the water off from this street to repair the pipes?"

"Not that I know of," he replied. "Look here, now, I want to tell you something, and I don't want you to shout 'fad' over it and call me a silly. I think I've got hold of a big thing. In fact, I believe I am about to produce a boon for all mankind!"

"Going to turn water into champagne?"

"There you go with a sneer in your voice! My goodness, woman, you do provoke me! Why can't you give me a word of encouragement in seeking to win fame and riches?"

"Well, tell me all about it, and I'll give you my opinion."

Mr. Bowser picked up the cat and pulled her tail in an absent-minded way and finally said:

"You know what snow is, of course. It's useful enough out in some foreign countries where they want to draw logs to the saw-mill; but it is a source of expense to the amount of thousands of pounds in the cities. It costs London city alone about £50,000 to get rid of her winter's snow. The snow must be shovelled up and carted off, you see."

"Yes I see."

"Well, suppose the snow could be melted on the streets and in the yards and the water run off into the rivers, suppose it could be done for about a hundredth part of the expense of removal—would there be world-wide fame and any amount of money for the inventor of the process or nothing?"

"It would be a splendid idea," said Mrs. Bowser.

He returned with three bottles and a gallon jug.

"Now you are talking. Now you are offering the encouragement to your husband expected of a wife. I tell you, my dear woman, I wouldn't sell my secret for a million pounds."

"You can melt the snow on the streets, can you?"

"I can melt it as fire melts grease. I can clean a whole city street with one barrel of fluid! I can melt snow for about a farthing a ton. It's a discovery that will knock the world off its feet."

"And how did you discover the process?" asked Mrs. Bowser, as she kept a serious face.

"Partly by means of an old manuscript left by a sailor who died in the hospital, and partly by a man who was out of work and was willing to part with his information for a sovereign. It's a certain thing and within two hours I'll be melting ice to prove it."

"Well, I hope there's something in it."

"Something in it! My dear woman, where I start with one barrel of water I'll end up with ten barrels of gold. Your words of encouragement have done wonders for me. I must now go to the chemist's for a few ingredients."

He went, and returned with three bottles and a gallon jar, the contents of which were poured into the barrel. Mrs. Bowser still further encouraged him by coming down stairs to see him pour and stir and mix, and the cook was kind enough to remark that Mr. Bowser looked like a man who would not knowingly blow up or set fire to his own house in order to kill off a poor girl working for twelve pounds a year. It was an hour before the experiment was ready. The dead sailor's manuscript and the hard-up man's advice were to the effect that the mixture need not stand more than ten minutes, but Mr. Bowser wanted to make a certain thing of it.

The stuff had a rank, acid smell, but he sniffed at it as heartily as if it had been eau de Cologne. A lump of ice was bought from the fish shop and laid on the ground, and with a great deal of solemnity he dipped a stick with a sponge tied to the end of it in the barrel and sopped it over the ice. There was no explosion or

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sudden outburst of flame. Even the cat tiptoed forward and smelt the lump.

Of course, ice won't melt as quickly as snow, and in his own mind Mr. Bowser gave that lump three minutes to vanish off the cold earth. The liquid honeycombed it and threw out a tan-yard odour, but there was no melting.

"What seems to be the matter?" Mrs. Bowser finally queried.

"I—I may not have put enough on," replied Mr. Bowser as he renewed the sop with a liberal hand. "There can't be any mistake in the mixing, and the thing is bound to work. Can't you keep that beastly cat away?"

The cat was chased away, and there was another painful period of waiting. The ice could be heard cracking, but there was no melting.

"Perhaps the discovery only alluded to very soft snow," suggested Mrs. Bowser.

"Soft snow be hanged!" he shouted. "I tell you this thing is all right. The stuff I put in cost five shillings, and it's bound to work."

"Then why doesn't it work? And if it cost five shillings for two pails full how are you going to make it pay? It strikes me——"

"Oh, yes, you are always being struck!" he interrupted. And this very minute you are hoping I will make a failure of this thing. But I won't, though. Perhaps it needs more stirring."

He seized the stick and stirred and swirled and poked, and again the lump of ice was cracked. The smell was ranker, but that was the only result.

"Perhaps the dying sailor left the wrong manuscript?" said Mrs. Bowser by way of breaking the painful silence.

"Why don't he take a teakettle of hot water to melt it?" queried the cook.

"By the living jingo she'll work or bust!" shouted Mr. Bowser as a wave of anger surged over him. "Stand back and gimme room."

He seized the barrel with a strong grip and up ended it over the lump of ice and then gave it a kick that sent it flying across the yard. Mrs. Bowser and the cook had retreated to a safe distance, but the cat had advanced to satisfy her feline curiosity. As the barrel went rolling the cat screamed out and began jumping up and down, but in half-a-minute changed from jumping to a wild career about the yard.

"You ought to be ashamed to kick a cat!" exclaimed Mrs. Bowser, as the cavorting went on.

"I never kicked her!" he replied. "What in thunder can ail her? Gimme a stick till I drive her over the fence."

He was looking about for a weapon when he gave a sudden start. Then he uttered an exclamation and tried to lift both feet off the ground at once. Then he kicked off his shoes and seemed to start in pursuit of the cat, and he had circled the yard twice before Mrs. Bowser and the cook grabbed him.

"Water—a pail of water—my feet!" he howled, and as soon as the water was drawn he plunged his feet into the pail.

He seemed to start in pursuit of the cat.

"Now then, will you explain this circus?" asked Mrs. Bowser as a look of relief came to his face.

"The acid got to my feet," he replied. "There was a gallon of acid, you know. The cat must have stepped into a puddle of it."

Mrs. Bowser got out the bottle of sweet oil and some rags, and the blistered feet were made comfortable, and their sole owner and proprietor hobbled upstairs and stretched himself out on the sofa. Mrs. Bowser hadn't called him a lunatic or an idiot, but he felt that he had lost prestige and must regain it. She was still soothing him when he sat up and pointed a finger at her and hoarsely whispered:

"Woman, I understand all!"

"All about melting snow?" she innocently asked.

"All about why my experiment was a failure. Don't seek to hide your guilt by looking at me in that bold-faced way. While I was gone to the chemist's you sneaked down and put salt or ashes or vinegar or something into that barrel."

"How foolish of you!"

"That will do! Denials are useless. You can go home to your mother by the 10.20 train to-morrow, and my lawyer will notify you of the legal steps I take. Woman, avaunt and leave your victim to die in peace!"

And, having squared himself and accounted for the failure of his experiment, Mr. Bowser drew up his legs and fell into a peaceful slumber. M. QUAD.

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THE LION'S WARS

The Campaign in the Pyrenees and South of France. 1813—1814.

THE flight of his brother Joseph, and the expulsion of his armies from the Peninsula, stirred the ambitious soul of Napoleon Bonaparte to its profoundest depths. He knew, none better, that successes won by the sword have to be maintained by the sword, so large reinforcements were at once dispatched and the whole of the forces in Spain placed under the command of Soult, the ablest, with the exception perhaps of Bernadotte, afterwards King of Sweden, of all Napoleon's marshals.

On taking command Soult at once proceeded to Pamplona, which we were investing. The folly which had characterised the operations of the French in the Peninsular War was at once made manifest. The French had never been able to strike a really decisive blow, because their generals could never agree in concerting plans of action.

At Pamplona Soult bore down in overwhelming force on the passes of Maya held by the British, and drove us back.

Greatly elated, Soult, a week later, on July 13th, 1813, dispatched the Comte D'Erlon with 18,000 men to eject us from Puerto de Maya, but, bent on retrieving the reverse at Maya, Sir W. Stewart's troops, 4,500 strong, stood their ground, till most of them were either killed or wounded.

At Roncesvalles, fought on the same day, fortune was a little kinder. General Cole and 10,000 men, confronted by General Clausel and 35,000 picked French troops, fought for six hours with such desperate valour, that, when Cole retreated to take up a more advantageous position, the French were too exhausted to follow him.

Pitted against a commander of such acknowledged ability as Soult, the British Army now clamoured for Wellington, who, on July 27th, arrived from San Sebastian.

His return greatly cheered our men, who gave him a most enthusiastic welcome.

Sir William Napier says that such was Wellington's resourcefulness that on this occasion he actually made a strategic use of his soldiers' greeting. Turning to one of his staff whilst his men were hurrahing he said, "Soult is a cautious soldier, and will delay his attack to ascertain the cause of these shouts. This will give time for the Sixth Division to arrive, and I shall beat him."

What followed showed how accurately Wellington had gauged his opponent's character. Soult did notice the cheering, and did pause sufficiently long to allow the Sixth Division under General Pack to arrive.

Then without a moment's delay Wellington seized the heights on the valley of the Lanz, and placed a large force on the edge of the valley to prevent the French from massing their entire army for one grand attack.

Soult, after disengaging a division to watch the force we had posted at the entrance to the valley, burst on the army under Wellington, and was repulsed with great loss. But the Portuguese stationed on our right had been a little shaky, seeing which, a strong column of French came up from Sorauren. The Portuguese, it is

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declared, did not on this occasion exhibit the white feather. For all this, they were no match for the French, who pressed them back with such vigour that they were thrown upon General Ross's brigade.

Re-animated by the calmness displayed by our men, the Portuguese reformed and charged the French so desperately as to force them down the hill. Quite undismayed, the French regained the hill, carrying all before them till, meeting Byng's brigade, they were checked.

At this moment no fewer than three French divisions had made good their footing on the heights, and unless we could dislodge them the battle would be lost. Silently, sternly, our men formed into line, waited till the order to advance was given, and then, spite of a withering fire, began steadily climbing the hill. Arrived at the summit, they rushed at the foe with such headlong valour, that they drove the French to the verge on the other side.

For a moment both the combatants paused hovering on the brink, and then the French were hurled into the valley below, in one inextricable mass.

Although the French suffered severely in the hand to hand fighting which followed, great was the dismay when it was found that the failure of two Portuguese regiments to prevent any further reinforcements arriving from Sorauren had resulted in the heights being silently scaled by the French brigade on one side, whilst we were sweeping their comrades from the other.

Tired as our men were, and fierce as was the tempest of bullets rained on us as we re-ascended the heights, we contrived after three heroic efforts to bundle out the intruders.

On landing in the valley, the French met the Sixth Division returning from pursuing their comrades. Another desperate fight ensued, but repeated doses of cold steel at length decided the day.

Reinforcements poured in at such a rate after this battle that Wellington found himself at the head of an army of 50,000 men, of whom quite half were British. But so many of these had to be sent away for the investment of the frontier towns, that when Soult's reinforcements also arrived the French force was nearly double that of our own.

Soult's great object in the operations which followed was to relieve St. Sebastian and keep open his communications with France. To achieve the former he planted a force between the British and the river Baztan. To retain the road to France he transferred the bulk of his army to Orthez, in order to effect a junction with D'Erlon.

But Wellington noticed the movement towards Orthez and guessed the object. The division he sent under Picton, to prevent the junction, marched so rapidly that they were able to seize Orthez. The French immediately retreated, leaving us in possession.

Soult had hoped that his retreat would have enabled him to raise the siege of St. Sebastian, and he was greatly surprised to find that Wellington had re-occupied Puerto de Maya fortress.

On the night of August 30th, 1813, Wellington carried the town by storm. The resistance we encountered from the French garrison was so aided by the co-operation of the townspeople, that our men became so infuriated that, when they did get inside, they perpetrated the most dreadful excesses. Not only was the town given up to pillage, but bands of soldiers went from house to house murdering every inhabitant they found.

Bad as their conduct was, it must be admitted that they had good cause for indignation, "As we had no quarrel with the townspeople, and as we came to Spain to free their country from the French," said a soldier who had been caught red-handed, and brought to Wellington, "they ought either to have remained neutral or fought for us. We have lost about 2,000 men to-day, and we have killed about the same number. If the punishment the townpeople have received isn't what people call retribution, blow me if I know what the word means."

The inhabitants of St. Sebastian, in not helping the soldiers who were risking their lives to rid Spain of the invaders, showed gross ingratitude. When they supplemented this by also killing us, who shall say that our men were not justified in taking the law into their own hands.

The winter of 1813, even in Southern France was so intensely cold, that operations had now to be suspended. When February arrived Wellington had completed his plans.

He would have liked to have marched straight on to Paris, but Bayonne was in the way. A series of masterly manœuvres compelled Soult to retire from the town, under the shelter of which he had stationed his camp during January, and retreat to Orthez, where, on the 14th February, he again tried conclusion with our invincible soldiers.

That the French after so many defeats should have made so good a fight as they did, shows of what splendid stuff the French soldier of that day was made. They lost of course, but they fought like heroes.

Our men, if they did not believe that they were the best soldiers in the world, were quite sure that Wellington was the best commander. In charging, this confidence made them irresistible. Our men loved getting to close quarters, but it was costly work.

Six times did our dauntless veterans at Orthez, led by the gallant Ross, force their way through the vine-clad cottages and gardens to be, when they reached the open ground at the rear of the village, hurled back again by a battery of French guns which were posted on a hill close by. They could have faced the guns in front, but there was a battery of sixteen guns on the Dax Road on their right which rent great gaps in their ranks.

But the British soldier is never so dangerous as when called on to fulfil an almost impossible task. Picton sent a reinforcement—they were immediately swept away.

Wellington then dispatched assistance. Those who were not annihilated by the guns went down before a wild charge of the French. Still our men persevered although Soult had loudly declared, "At last I have the English."

The moment Wellington, to draw the French from St. Boes, assailed their left, we made a wild rush at the hill which had defied us all through that dreadful day, and the bayonet did the rest. The attack on the left was equally successful.

The road was now open to Paris, but as it would have been dangerous to have allowed Soult, who had retreated eastwards to Toulouse, to escape and thus threaten our communications, Wellington determined to reduce that town.

The fortifications of Toulouse would have been useless against modern ordnance, but Wellington's guns were not only of poor calibre but he found the high wall which ran round the town strongly flanked with towers.

Furthermore, the place derived additional support

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Drawn by So murderous was the fire that the leading ranks, unable to face it, sprang into a hollow road twenty-five feet deep. Engraved by Butt.

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from its position. Except at one point, it was protected by the Garonne, a deep unfordable river, and the canal of Brienne on the north, east and west. The weakness of the south side had been remedied by strong fortifications.

Not daring to defend the city from the inside, which might lead to his forces being shut up for months, Soult took up a strong position on two lofty ridges outside the town, the natural strength of which he increased by redoubts and field works. Between the two ridges the ground sloped to a valley, leading to the town of Toulouse.

Wellington, on reconnoitring, found that the number of forts and redoubts Soult had erected on the first ridge, which was over two miles long, would enable the French to pour in such a deadly fire, that he resolved on risking a night attack. But the distances some of the brigades had to travel was so great, that when the sun rose on the morning of April 10th, the attack had not yet begun.

Whilst our infantry were plodding steadily up the hill Beresford's Dragoons and Somerset's Hussars crept round by the valley in order to take the enemy in flank. But owing to the water-courses travelling was made almost impossible.

When the retreat was sounded, our men had to leave their guns behind them in the marshes. Their safety would have been endangered had not Wellington dispatched Vivian's cavalry brigade to attack the bridge of Bordes.

This division drew off the enemy and enabled Beresford's and Somerset's troops to get clear of the valley higher up, and, on leaving the valley, to storm and capture the bridge of Montandron.

Freyne, acting without instructions, assailed, and marched round the first ridge and, at the head of 9,000 Spanish assaulted the second. Our allies fought well enough for a time although the big guns of the French made huge gaps in their ranks, but when the bridge of Matabiau was reached, so murderous was the fire to which they were exposed, that the leading ranks, unable to face it, sprang into a hollow road twenty-five feet deep.

The whole force at once became panic-stricken; a few sheltered themselves behind a neighbouring bank, but the bulk joined their companions in the road below.

The moment they disappeared from view, the French rushed from their intrenchments, and disposing themselves round the brink, poured volley after volley into the helpless crowd beneath. The exultation of the French knew no bounds, and they showed no quarter.

A battery of guns was brought up from the Matabiau, and the hollow road raked from end to end. The annals of war record nothing more horrible than the butchery of the Spanish at Toulouse.

Strange as it may seem, Wellington's foresight was so great, that the moment he saw the Spanish troops approaching the fatal spot, he turned to an officer and said: "Did you ever see 9,000 soldiers run away?"

"No, sir."

"Wait a moment, and you will."

Wellington at once ordered up a couple of regiments to the rescue of the poor wretches who rushed madly away as soon as the French turned their attention to the new comers. The British silently opened their ranks to let the fugitives pass, and then proceeded to punish the French for their cruelty by endeavouring to drive them into the very death-trap which had proved so fatal to the poor Spaniards. They did not succeed in this, but on getting to close quarters they punished the enemy so severely that they literally bolted back to their intrenchments.

But the tide of battle had not yet turned in our favour. The fiery Picton had been instructed to make a feigned attack on the bridge of Juneaux in order to divert attention from Hill's attack on the ridge. Feigned attacks were so little to Picton's tastes that he endeavoured to rush the bridge in earnest. The works protecting the bridge being too high to scale without a ladder, the French sharpshooters were able to kill and wound some 400 of our gallant fellows before Picton could be prevailed on to retire.

Our position now was anything but hopeful. The dispersion of the Spanish army, and the repulse of Picton, enabled Soult to act on the offensive. Fifteen thousand men were hurled on Beresford's flank at the bridge of Montandron, Vial's cavalry encircling them on the other side.

An iron circle was being slowly drawn round them, when Beresford's men burst through, and before Vial's cavalry could charge, formed squares. At this critical moment Lambart's Brigade, which had reached the summit of the second ridge, seeing the deadly peril of Beresford's Division rushed down the hill with such force as to utterly disorganise Taupin's men, the discomfiture being greatly increased by the death of Taupin himself.

Then the 42nd and 79th Highland regiments came up, and the French had to bear as best they could one of the ugly rushes for which the Scotch soldiers are famous.

From end to end the ridges were now alive with red coats, such of the French as remained on the summit being swept down the hill-side like a torrent. Then we stormed the redoubts.

In capturing these the loss of life was awful. The 42nd having dispersed thrice their number at the bridge of Montandron turned their attention to a neighbouring redoubt. They went into action with 500 men. After the battle only ninety were left.

Towards evening the French so lost heart that to prevent a rout Soult retired into Toulouse. Next day before Wellington could invest the town Soult had retreated to Careassonne. Whilst Wellington was marching into Toulouse the French garrison, on the 14th, made a night attack on the investing force under Sir John Hope. Taken completely by surprise they penetrated our camp, killing General Hay and numerous other officers, besides taking Colonel Townsend and other officers prisoners. Hundreds of our men also were bayoneted in their sleep.

The darkness was so great that it was not till some of the tents caught fire that the British could tell friend from foe. Cheered by their officers, we soon retrieved the position. General Hope, a man of herculean strength, slew, it is said, more men that night than the renowned Shaw is reported to have done at Waterloo. Ultimately the French were driven back with such slaughter that out of the sortie party only one third returned.

The abdication of Napoleon and the Restoration of Louis XVIII. put an end to the war, and the British Army (with the exception of the cavalry who marched to Boulogne and those destined for the colonies) embarked at Bordeaux receiving a hearty welcome on reaching home.

[NEXT WEEK: **The Battle of Waterloo (June 18, 1815)**]

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THE SHIP'S DOCTOR.

WHEN first I met him he had long left the sea. Spare, with grizzled hair and moustache, he showed plainly the marks of his old occupation.

There were the rolling gait, the tanned, seamy features, the keenness of eye, which somehow are the almost invariable signs of the men who go down to the sea in ships.

Add to this that he was shabby, woefully so, and that from the moment he had emptied his first glass of "Jamaica" hot, his talk went on without ceasing to the complete drowning of every other voice, and you have a very fair picture of the man as I knew him.

At this time, too, he acted as occasional assistant to a "cheap" doctor in a poor neighbourhood. Two days in the week he came over "West," from the salubrious quarter that has Victoria Park for its centre, and did the dirty work his employer had no fancy for doing himself. As a matter of fact, poor old Burroughs was a far cleverer man in his profession than ever was Peter McGowan, M.D., the employer aforesaid; but he was his own enemy, and a life that might have been lived with the greatest advantage to himself, to those belonging to him, and to society generally, was simply frittered away without being of use to anybody.

His strong point was "tall yarns," so tall, so overpowering in altitude, that his hearers (and he was always the centre of an awe-struck group of listeners on club nights) were carried to heights, the safe descent from which seemed so problematical as to engender grave fears in the minds of timid souls.

Well past sixty, he had not married and settled down until about two years before I came across him.

His wife, so rumour had it, had been a barmaid, with a profound admiration for the ex-salt-water "Æsculapius." Rumour said also that the lady's "little savings" had furnished the home, but as that is a mere detail, and moreover, has about it the elements of scandal, the statement may be taken for what it is worth.

I am to this day quite unacquainted with Mrs. Burroughs, and therefore cannot speak from personal experience, but I should say, from certain plain indications, that she had done much during her short spell of married life to "pull together" her lord and master.

Without doubt he needed considerable application of the process, and although his little failings still cropped up now and again, he distinctly showed that there was a firm hand somewhere in the background steering the ship.

Apart, then, from an undue leaning towards the "convivial" and a spirit of an utter indifference with regard to appearances and his "outer man," Ned Burroughs was undeniably a taking personality. Witty, an accomplished linguist (to my knowledge, he knew and spoke well five languages) a *raconteur*, than whom I know none better, he was the life and soul of the club to which we both belonged.

I can see him now, in his favourite seat by the window, and surrounded by a group of eager-eared men, discoursing wonderful things, in his own magnetically wonderful manner.

Stories of all kinds, shark stories, "bush" stories; adventures in the "Rockies," and encounters with "Polars" in the Arctic Seas; he was great in all—while there were simple souls among us who scorned to doubt, listened rapt, and accepting with childlike faith poor Ned's "largest order."

I do not suppose that any man, woman, or child who once came in contact with him, failed to love him. A lovable man may be pardoned the committing of many sins; there is a tendency to look at him from your blind side; and so Ned Burroughs held, by virtue of his warm heart, his winsome attractiveness of disposition, a big place in the affectionate regard of all who knew him.

Now, if there was one thing that the "doctor" had an especial fondness for, it was children. Little children, wee toddlers of that fascinating age, when, too old for "worriment," and too young for mischief, they insensibly wind themselves round the heart of every man worthy the name.

It was this predilection that led to his final undoing, or shall I rather say, to the doing of that which will make his name to be known among men for all time, as that of one of earth's true kings and heroes.

He was always reticent upon his home life, and I, for one, ever respected his reserve.

That Burroughs had a child of his own, a little chap of three or thereabouts, everybody knew, as too, everybody could not but see the glistening tenderness in his eyes whenever he referred to his infant son. Then it was that he put aside for a while the weaving of new marvels, and enlarged upon the present precocity and certain future greatness of his little heir.

It was on a bitterly cold night in January, just five years ago now, that the incident I am about to relate had its beginning.

There was an unusually large number of members present, and Burroughs, upon the stroke of eleven, was in the throes of adventurous relation.

The scene of this story was laid in Constantinople, the yarn itself being of such intensely thrilling nature that reason and belief trembled on their respective thrones.

"It was nearly midnight," he was saying in that winningly impressive way of his, that half-compelled, half-persuaded the doubter among his auditors, "it was nearly midnight when I left the ship quietly in a 'cacique,' whispering the boatman to make for a point a little below Damietta. By the light of a small bull's-eye lantern I read again the fair Zuleika's letter. Yes, a quarter after midnight I was to be at the little door in the garden wall, at the top of the river steps. There I was to knock three times, utter the name 'Zuleika,' and the door would be opened by an old negress, the lady's special attendant. After that, implicit trust in what should follow."

"Here! I say, doctor! do you mean to tell us that a beautiful Turkish houri wrote you a letter like that?" interrupted a sceptic.

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"Let the doctor alone, Bruce, he's getting on splendidly, if you'll only be quiet," remonstrated a believer.

"Wrote me a letter like that—why if I told you, which I don't mean to, all there was in it, you'd be more than surprised, I'm thinking. Well, the boat arrived at the flight of steps leading up to the little door. The moon shone so brightly that it was nearly as light as day. I sprang up the steps, and knocked thrice at the iron-studded wicket. Then speaking the word 'Zuleika' I waited. In less than a moment I saw the door slowly open inwards, in its place appearing a horribly ugly old negress, who——"

"Yes, yes, go on!" cried the now excited circle of listeners, for Burroughs had suddenly stopped.

But he took not the slightest notice of them.

In the doorway stood a tall, good-looking girl of, maybe, sixteen, who simply looked appealingly at the doctor, he being seated exactly facing her.

His response to this mute address was curious.

Clapping his shabby old sombrero-like wide-awake on to his head, he rose quickly from his chair and without a word of apology or explanation to his fellow members, moved as quickly across the room towards the girl, whom he caught hold of by the wrist and hurried out, shutting the door after him.

As to what happened next I am dependent upon the report of one who saw through it all to the end.

Within easy distance of the club was, indeed is, a district notorious for its poverty, its wretchedness, some say its crime.

It is towards this that Burroughs and his young companion make as fast as the slippery state of the pavement will allow them.

Appleton Buildings is their objective point, a block of so-called model dwellings, hidden away behind the more imposing screen of fine shops of the main road.

The doctor knows the place well. Only that afternoon he has been there, leaving with a conviction almost that there would be no need for a re-visit.

Out of the glare and busy brightness of the great thoroughfare, and by way of a narrow bye-street into the dreary region surrounding the "buildings" aforesaid.

What a ghastly mockery is this pretence in the housing of the poor! What a need is there for not only a capitalist and philanthropist, but for a philanthropist with intimate and personal knowledge of the class he would seek to benefit!

In his own queer, restless way, Burroughs had thought much on this question, therein differing greatly from his pompous chief, McGowan, who cared for none of these things, and as he and Nelly Garvy threaded their way through alley-way and court, ultimately emerging on to the paper-strewn yard of Appleton Buildings, he reviled Dives in his heart, for that the rich man was blind in all his works.

Up, up, up to the topmost storey of the very dirtiest of all the dirty blocks of the poor man's barracks.

Burroughs, as a man, was a Bohemian, and, therefore, not particularly keen in the matter of ultra-cleanliness and order, but as a doctor his whole soul revolted at the despite done to every known law of health and decency.

Moreover, his sympathetic spirit had been deeply stirred by the patient endurance of the little sufferer whom he had now come for the third time to visit, and if it might be, to lure back to life.

That the chances in favour of this were but small he knew only too well. There was but one road to follow one only possible thing to do, which thing would be at once unpleasant, and done at the risk of the operator's life.

Poor Susy Garvy, barely nine, and as yet scarce acquaint with a world none too well disposed to such as she, lay gasping for breath, the terrible sound of which, caused by that fatal formation in the throat which is the terror alike of doctor and patient.

Only last year, Susy had participated in one of those wonderful "Fresh Air" excursions, and the memory of that day, the beauty of it is the one thing now that appeals most strongly to her wandering little mind.

A swift glance at the face of the child; a hand touch of wrist and forehead, and Ned Burroughs saw that the moment had come for decisive action.

Risk *versus* self! It was very simple, and although it is a matter for thankfulness that there exist souls, many, many souls far and away above consideration of self where duty is to be done, the number of God's heroes who will deliberately stake their lives for another's good is, and must be in the very nature of things, limited.

Two hours after the doctor's exit from our midst, I was summoned by the porter.

I found at the door inside a four-wheeler, a transformed man.

All frivolous, laughter-loving expression gone, Ned Burroughs, his hand on the lowered window of the cab, his face set as with a great purpose, addressed me hurriedly:

"Chalmers! I can't come inside; I fear I am going be very ill—I am going at once to the hospital."

"Aren't you going home?" I said.

"Home!—No—not home!—I've written my address on this piece of paper," passing it out to me. "Do me the kindness of writing a line to my wife, and tell her the truth as gently as I know you can. But don't go and see her. I have my reasons. Will you promise me that you won't go and see her?"

"Of course, if you so wish it," I said. "But are you suffering much?"

"No, not yet—not yet—but it will come, and if I should never have the opportunity of speaking to you again, my last word to you is that I do not regret it; no, thank Heaven, I do not regret it."

Could this be the Ned Burroughs of a few hours ago? Transformed, did I say? rather transfigured! for if ever a human being revealed in his face the divinity which is said to belong, howsoever latently, to every child of man, then did I assuredly see the divine that night in the person of Edward Burroughs, ex-ship's doctor.

A day or two later we heard the truth. How that he had performed, by personal inhalement, that terrible operation of withdrawing the cord from the throat of a diptheitic patient.

Signally successful, the child came back to life from that moment.

But poor Ned! he died in his wife's arms at St. Mildreds on that night week.

As a friend and club member we shall never replace him; I know I shall not, and when sometimes his memory is strong upon us, as it often is, we drink in sad silence to a name which needs no eulogy, in that each of us has a warm heart-corner for it, that of our dear old comrade the "ship's doctor."

Ralph Enderby.

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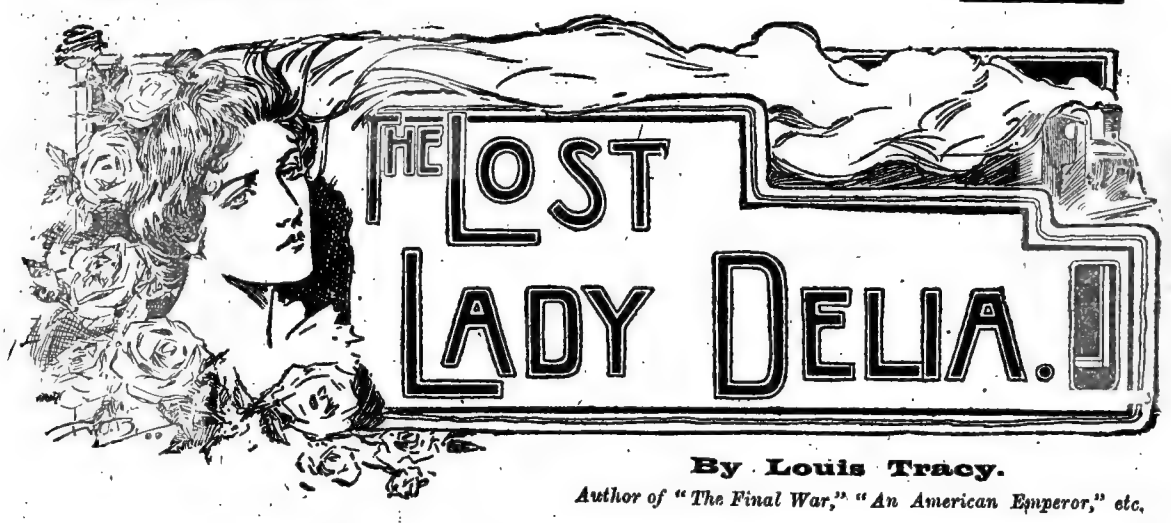
GRAND SERIAL STORY. START TO-DAY.



By Louis Tracy.

Author of "The Final War," "An American Emperor," etc.

SUMMARY.

LADY DELIA LYLE leaves her house one foggy November afternoon, and is seen at Victoria Station, on the Underground Railway, by Mr. Reginald Brett, a barrister friend of her husband, who gets her ticket and puts her in the train for Richmond, where she says she is going to see her sister, but from that time she is not heard of.

After some days have passed, without bringing any news of Lady Delia, her husband, Sir Charles Lyle, puts the matter into the hands of detectives, Inspector Winter taking charge of the case.

Brett also promises to do all he can, and he finds out that Lady Delia, on the night of her disappearance, instead of going to Richmond, alighted at Sloane Square, and went to a block of flats called Raleigh Mansions.

Towards the end of the month the body of a woman, evidently murdered, is found wedged beneath a drain-pipe in the Thames at Putney, and, though Sir Charles does not identify the body, Brett imagines it to be that of Lady Delia. Shortly after this discovery Lady Delia's maid, Jane Harding, disappears. She is afterwards found to have gone on the stage.

Brett now starts investigations at Raleigh Mansions, and he fixes on two residents there as being likely to have been connected with Lady Delia. These are a Mr. Sydney H. Pyne, who is not at present in residence, and a Mrs. Hilmer, whom he finds to be Pyne's sister.

It had transpired that Pyne had gone to Monte Carlo, and thither Brett goes, and he discovers that though letters are addressed to Pyne at the Hotel du Cercle, he is not known there.

One afternoon Brett goes to a pigeon-shooting match between a Russian count and an Englishman named Albert Mensmore, in which the latter is just beaten, and apparently feels it very much.

In the evening Mensmore is at the gaming table, and after losing heavily goes out into the grounds, followed by Brett, and commences to pace up and down.

CHAPTER IX.

BREAKING THE BANK.

THERE were not many people in this part of the Casino gardens. A few lovemaking couples and a handful of others who preferred the quietude of Nature to the throng of the promenade, made up the occupants of the winding paths that creep along the steep face of the seaward slope.

At last Mensmore halted. There was no one in front, and he turned to look if the terrace was clear behind him. He caught sight of Brett, but did not recognise him, and leant against a low wall, ostensibly to gaze at the sea until the other had passed.

Brett came up to him and cried cheerily: "Hallo, is that you, Mr. Mensmore? Isn't it a lovely night?"

Mensmore, startled at being thus unexpectedly addressed by name, wheeled about, stared at the newcomer, and said, very stiffly: "Yes; but I felt rather seedy in the Casino, so I came here to be alone."

"Of course," answered the barrister. "You look a little out of sorts. Perhaps got a chill, eh? It's dangerous weather here, particularly on these heavenly evenings Come back with me to the hotel, and have a stiff brandy and soda. It will brace you up."

Mensmore flushed a little at this persistence. "I tell you," he growled, "that I only require to be left in peace, and I shall soon recover from my indisposition. I am awfully obliged to you, but ——"

"But you wish me to walk on and mind my own business?"

"Not exactly that, old chap. Please don't think me rude. I am awfully sorry, but I *can't* talk much to-night."

"So I understand. That is why I think it is best for you to have company, even such disagreeable companionship as my own."

"Confound it, man," cried the other, now thoroughly irritated; "tell me which way you are going and I will go the other. Why on earth cannot you take a polite hint, and leave me to myself?"

"It is precisely because I am good at taking a hint that I positively refuse to leave you until you are safely landed at your hotel. Indeed, I may stick to you then for some hours."

"The dickens take you! What do you mean?"

"Exactly what I say."

"If you don't quit this instant I will punch your head for you."

"Ah! You are recovering already. But before you start active exercise take your overcoat off. That revolver in the breast pocket might go off accidentally, you know. Besides, as I shall hit back, I might fetch my knuckles against it, and that would be hardly fair. Otherwise, I can do as much in the punching line as you can, any day."

This reply utterly disconcerted Mensmore.

"Look here," he said, avoiding Brett's steadfast gaze, "what are you talking about? What has it got to do with you, anyhow?"

"Oh, lots. My business principally consists in looking after other people's affairs. Just now it is my definite intention to prevent you from blowing out your brains, or what passes for them."

"Then all I can say is that I wish you were in Jericho. It is your own fault if you get into trouble over this matter. Had you gone about your business I would have waited. As it is——"

It so happened that the guard, having nothing better to do, strolled round the terraces by the same path that Mensmore and Brett had followed. The first sight that met his astonished eyes, when, in the flood of moonlight he

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discovered their identity, was the spectacle of these two springing at each other like a pair of wild cats.

"*Parbleu*," he shouted, "the solitary ones are fighting!"

He ran forward, drawing his short sword ready to stick the weapon into either of the combatants if the majesty of the law in his own person were not at once respected.

In reality, affairs were simple enough. Mensmore had made an ineffectual attempt to draw his revolver, and Brett had pinioned him before he could get his hand up to his pocket. Both men were pretty equally matched, and it was difficult to say how the struggle might have ended had not the sword-brandishing guard appeared on the scene.

Brett, even in this exciting situation, kept his senses; Mensmore, blind with rage and the madness of one who would voluntarily plunge into the Valley of the Shadow, took heed of naught save the effort to rid himself of the restraining clutch.

"Put away your sword. Seize his arms from behind. He is a suicide," shouted the barrister to the gesticulating and shrieking Frenchman.

Fortunately the man grasped his meaning, for Brett was an excellent linguist. He caught Mensmore's arms, put a knee in the small of his back, and doubled him backwards with a force that nearly dislocated his spine. In the same instant Brett secured the revolver which he promptly pocketed.

"It is well," he said to the guard. "Here is a louis. Say nothing, but leave us."

"Monsieur understands that the honour of a French policeman——"

"I understand that if there is any report made of this affair to the authorities you will be dismissed for negligence. Had this lunatic been left to your care he would now have been lying here dead. Do you doubt me?"

The guard hesitated. "Monsieur mentioned a louis," he said, for Brett's finger and thumb had returned the coin to his waistcoat pocket.

This transaction satisfactorily ended, Brett accosted Mensmore, who was awkwardly twisting himself to see if his backbone were all right.

"You are not hurt I hope?"

"It is matterless. Why could you not let me finish the business in my own way?"

"Because the world has some use for a man like you. Because you are a moral coward and require support from a stronger nature. Because I did not want to think of that girl crying her eyes out to-morrow when she read of your death, or heard of it, as she assuredly would have done."

Mensmore, though still furious at Brett's interference, was visibly amazed at this final reference. "What do you know about her?" he said.

"Nothing, save what my eyes tell me."

"They seem to tell you a remarkable lot about my affairs."

"Possibly. Meanwhile I want you to give me your word of honour that you will not make any further attempt on your life for the next seven days."

"My word of honour! Will you accept it?"

"Most certainly."

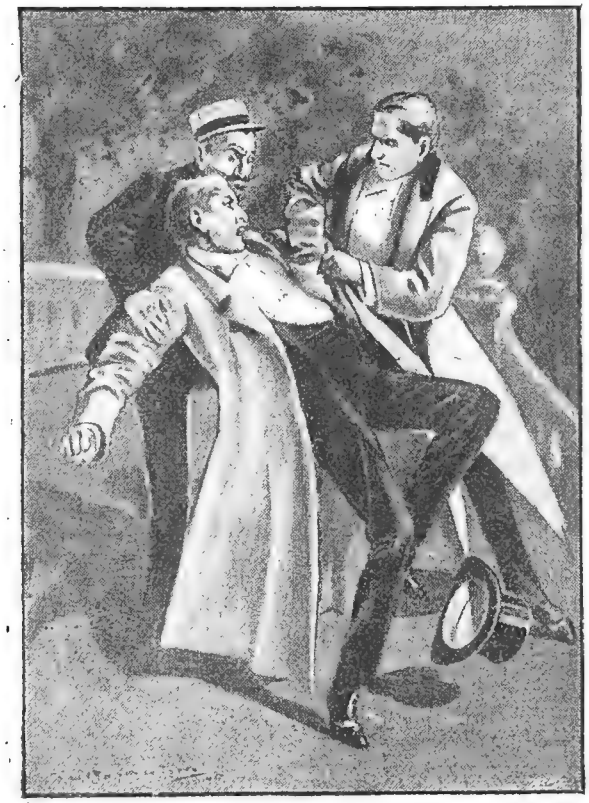
"You are a queer chap, and no mistake. Very well, I give it. At the same time I cannot help dying of starvation. I lost my last cent to-night at roulette. I am hopelessly involved in debts which I cannot pay. I have no prospects and no friends. You are not doing me a kindness, my dear fellow, in keeping me alive, even for seven days."

"You could have obtained your fare to London from the authorities of the Casino?"

"Hardly. I lost very little at roulette. I am not such a fool. My losses are nearly all in bets over the pigeon-shooting match which I ought to have won. I was backing myself at a game where I was apparently sure to succeed."

"Until you were beaten by a woman's voice."

"Yes, wizard. I am too dazed to wonder at you



He caught Mensmore's arms, put a knee in the small of his back, and doubled him backwards.

sufficiently. Yet I would have lost fifty times for her sake, though it was for her sake that I wanted to win."

"Come, let us smoke. Sit down, and tell me all about it."

They took the nearest seat, lighting cigarettes. The guard, watching them from the shade of a huge palm tree, murmured:

"Holy Virgin, what madmen are these English! They move apart, unknown; they fight; they fraternise; they consume tobacco—all within five minutes." And he lovingly felt for the louis to assure himself that he was not dreaming.

"There is not much to tell," said Mensmore, who had quite recovered his self-control, and was now trying to sum up the man who had so curiously entered his life at the moment when he had decided to do away with it. "I came here, being a poor chap living mostly on his wits, to go in for the pigeon-shooting tournaments. I won several, and was in fair funds. Then I fell in love. The girl is rich, well connected, and all that sort of thing. She is the first good influence that has crossed my life, so I thought that perhaps my luck was now going to turn. I backed myself for all I was worth, and more, to win the championship. If it came off I should have won over £3,000. As it is, I owe £500, which must be paid on Monday. My total assets, after I had settled my hotel bill and sent a cheque to a chum who took some of my bets in his own name, was £20. Now I have nothing. So you will see——"

"Yes," interrupted Brett, "it is a hard case. But death is no settlement. Nobody gets paid and everybody is worried."

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"My dear fellow, my life is in your keeping for seven days. After that, I presume, I take myself in charge again."

The barrister thought deeply before he inquired: "Why did you go to the Casino to-night, then, if you do not patronise the tables as a rule?"

The other coloured somewhat and laughed sarcastically. "Just a final bit of folly. I dreamt that my luck had turned."

"Dreamt?"

"Yes, last night. Three times did I imagine that I was playing roulette, and that after a certain number—whether thirteen or twenty-three, I was uncertain—turned up, there was a run of seventeen on the red. The funny thing is that I had an impression that the number was twenty-three, but with a doubt that it might be thirteen. I remember, during a sub-conscious state in the third dream, resolving to listen and look more carefully to discover the exact number. But again things got blurred. The only clear point was that the run of seventeen on the red commenced at once."

"Well?"

"Well. I took my last twenty, went to the Casino, became a bit impatient when neither number turned up for quite a while, and then when thirteen appeared I backed the red. But four times it was the black that won."

"So I saw."

"Have you been keeping guard over me?"

"Yes in a sort of a way."

"You *are* a queer chap. I can't help saying that I am obliged to you. But it won't do any good. I am absolutely dead broke."

"Now listen to me. I will pay your fare back to London and give you something to live on until I return a week hence. Then you must come and see me, and I will help you into some sort of situation. But you must once and for all abandon this suicidal notion."

"What about my debts?"

"Confound your debts. Tell people to wait until you are able to pay them."

"And—and the girl?"

"If she is worth having she will give you a chance of making a living sufficient to enable you to marry her. She is of age, I suppose, and can marry anyone she likes."

Mensmore puffed his cigarette in silence for fully a minute. Then he said:

"You are a very decent sort, Mr.——"

"Brett—Reginald Brett is my name."

"Well, Mr. Brett, you propose to hand me £10 for my railway fare, and, say, £5 for my existence, until we meet again in London, in exchange for which you purchase the rights in my life indefinitely, accidents and reasonable wear and tear excepted."

"Exactly!"

"Make it £20, with a fiver down, and I accept."

"Why the stipulation?"

"I want to back my dream. The number is twenty-three, as it evidently was not thirteen. I want to see that thing through. I will put a fiver on the red after twenty-three turns up, and if I lose I shall be quite satisfied."

"What if I refuse?"

"Then I don't care a bit what happens for the next seven days. After that, *au revoir*, should we chance to meet across the divide. Please make up your mind quickly, as that run on the red may come and go whilst we are sitting here."

Brett opened his pocket-book. "Here," he said with a smile, "I will give you a ten-pound note. You will reach the maximum more quickly if you are right."

Mensmore's face lit up with excitement. "By Jove, you are a brick," he said. "So you really trust me?"

"Yes."

"Then give me back my revolver."

Without a word Brett handed him the weapon. Mensmore stood up and threw it far out into the deep waters of the Mediterranean.

"Come," he cried; "come with me to the Casino. You will see something. This is not my own luck; it is borrowed. Come, quick!"

They raced off, Brett himself being more fired with the zest of the thing than he cared to admit. Within the Casino all the tables were now crowded, but Mensmore hurried to the centre one.

"It was here that I played in my dream," he whispered, "soon after I came to it."

He edged through the onlookers, closely followed by Brett. Neither cared for the scowls and injured looks cast at them by the people whom they forced out of the way.

The Italian, the winner of half-an-hour ago, had come back like a moth to the candle. Now he was getting his wings singed. At last, with a groan, he hastily rose, but as a final effort flung the maximum, 6,000 francs, on the black.

The disc whirled round, the ball rested in one of the little squares, and the croupier's monotonous words came:

"*Vingt-trois, passe, rouge gagne!*"

Out bounced the Italian, and Mensmore seized his chair, turning to Brett with white face as he murmured:

"You hear! Twenty-three!"

He lovingly felt for the louis to assure himself he was not dreaming.

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The barrister nodded, and placed his hands on Mensmore's shoulders as though to steady him.

Mensmore staked his £10 note on the red. It became £20, then £40. Another whirl and it was £80! a fourth made it £160.

Mensmore was now so agitated that the table and the players swam before his eyes. But Brett, under the stress of circumstances, had the gift of remaining preternaturally cool.

At the fifth coup the sum to Mensmore's credit was £320. He would have left it all on the table had not Brett withdrawn £80 in notes, as the maximum is £240.

When Mensmore won the sixth and seventh coups a buzz of animated interest passed around the board. People began to note the run on the red together with the fact that a man was staking the maximum each time. Even the croupier cast a fleeting glance at the newcomer, as for the fourth time his long rake pushed across the table the little printed slip which sets forth that the Casino owes the bearer 6,000 francs.

Thenceforth Mensmore sat in a state of stupor more pronounced now that he was playing and awake than when he dreamt he was playing.

Each time he mechanically pushed forth a maximum slip and received back two, whilst the eager onlookers now burst into cries of wonder that brought others running from all parts of the room.

But Brett did not lose count.

When the red had turned up seventeen times, and the amount to Mensmore's credit was £3,200, he shook the latter violently as he was about to shove forward another maximum, and of his own volition, placed the little slip on the black.

"*Douze, impasse noire gagne!*" sang out the croupier, and Brett hissed into Mensmore's ear:

"Get up at once."

His strangely-made acquaintance obeyed, gathered up his slips and notes, fastened them securely in an inner pocket, and the pair quitted the Casino amidst extravagant protestations of goodwill and friendship from all the voluble foreigners present.

It was some time before the roulette tables began their orderly round again, for Mensmore's sensational performance was the equivalent to the proceeding at *trente et quarante*, familiarly known as "breaking the bank."

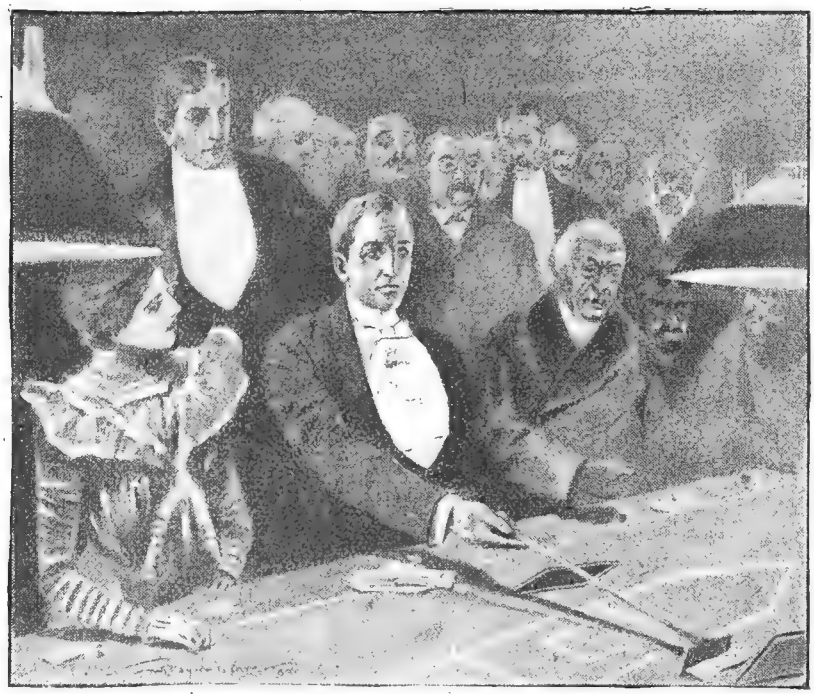
In the latter game there is the high limit of 300,000f., which, if once won, causes that particular table to cease play for the day.

In roulette, on the other hand, it is a mere question of endurance.

The highest recorded run is twenty-three on the black, but a run of seventeen on the red is sufficiently remarkable to keep Monte Carlo in talk for a week.

Albert Mensmore certainly could not complain that the events of that particular evening were dull. For one hour at least he lived in true *fin de siècle* style, having stepped back from the porch of death with dishonour, to the possession of a sum more than sufficient for his reasonable requirements.

The pace was rapid and almost fatal.



Each time he mechanically pushed forward a maximum slip.

CHAPTER X.

SOME GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

ONCE safe in the seclusion of Brett's sitting-room his companion almost collapsed. The strain had been a severe one, and now he had to pay the penalty by way of reaction.

The barrister forced him to swallow a stiff brandy and soda, and then wished him to retire to rest, but the other protested with some show of returning animation.

"Let me talk, for goodness' sake," he cried. "I cannot be alone. You have seen me through a lot of trouble tonight. Stick to me for another hour, there's a good fellow."

"With pleasure. Perhaps it is the best thing you can do, after all. Let us see how much you have won."

Brett made a calculation on a sheet of paper and said: "Exclusive of the original stake of £10 you ought to have £3,190."

Mensmore pulled out of his pocket the crumpled up bundle of notes and bills. Brett's £10 note was amongst them, and he tossed it across the table with a smile.

"There's your capital. I will see if the total is all right before we go shares."

Reggie nodded, and Mensmore began to jot down the items of his valuable package. He bothered with the figures for some time but could not get them right. Finally he tossed everything over to Brett, saying:

"No matter how I count, I can't get this calculation straight. Seventeen coups, beginning with £10, work out at £3,190 right enough. But in this lot there is £3,430, and they don't pay twice at the Casino as a rule."

The barrister thought for a moment, and then laughed heartily. "I remember now," he said, "I kept careful count of the series of seventeen, and then, on my own account, as you were too dazed to notice anything, I put a maximum on the black. Your dream turned up trumps, as the series stopped and black won. Hence the odd £240."

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"Then that is yours," said the other gravely. "I will take £1,190 to square all my debts, and we go shares in the balance, a thousand each, if you think that fair. If not I will gladly hand over the lot, after paying my debts I mean."

Mensmore's seriousness impressed the barrister more than any other incident of that dramatic evening.

"You forget," he replied, "that I told you I had money in plenty for my own needs. You must keep every farthing except my own £10, which you do not now need. No. Please do not argue. I will consent to no other course. This turn of Fortune's wheel should provide you with sufficient capital to branch out earnestly in your career, whatever it be. I will ask my interest in different manner."

"I can never repay you, in gratitude at any rate. And there is another who will be thankful to you when she knows. Ask anything you like. Make any stipulation you please. I agree to it."

"It is a bargain. Sign this."

Brett took a sheet of notepaper, bearing the crest of the Hotel du Cercle, dated it, and wrote:—

"I promise that, for the space of twelve months, I will not make a bet of any sort, nor gamble at any game of chance."

When Mensmore read the document his face fell a little. "Won't you except pigeon-shooting?" he said. "I am sure to beat that Russian next time."

"I can allow no exceptions."

"But why limit me for twelve months?"

"Because if in that time you do not get sense enough to stop risking your happiness, even your life, upon the turn of a card or the flight of a bird, the sooner thereafter you shoot yourself the less trouble you will bring upon those connected with you."

"You are a rum chap," murmured Mensmore, "and you put matters pretty straight, too. However, here goes. You don't bar me from entering for sweepstakes."

He signed the paper, and tossed it over to Brett, whilst the latter did not comment upon the limitation to his intentions imposed by Mensmore's final sentence. The man undoubtedly was a good shot, and during his residence in the Riviera he might pick up some valuable prizes.

"And now," said Brett, "may I ask as a friend to what use you intend to put your newly-found wealth?"

"Oh, that is simple enough. I have to pay £500 which I lost in bets over that beastly unlucky match. Then I have a splendid 'spec,' into which I will now be able to place about £2,000—a thing which I have good reason to believe will bring me in at least ten thou' within the year, and there is over a thousand pounds to go on with. And all thanks to you."

"Never mind thanking me. I am only too glad to have taken such a part in the affair. I will never forget this night as long as I live."

"Nor I. Just think of it. I might be lying in the gardens now, or in some mortuary, with half my head blown off."

"Tell me," said Brett, between the contemplative puffs of a cigar, "what induced you to think of suicide?"

"It was a combination of circumstances," replied the other. "You must understand that I was somewhat worried about financial and family matters when I came to Monte Carlo. It was not to gamble, in a sense, that I stopped here. I have loafed about the world a good deal, but I may honestly say that I never made a fool of myself at cards or backing horses. At most kinds of sport I am fairly proficient, and in pigeon-shooting, which goes on here so extensively, I am undoubtedly an expert. For instance, all this season I have kept myself in funds simply by means of these competitions."

Brett nodded approvingly.

"Well, in the midst of my minor troubles, I must needs go and fall over head and ears in love—a regular bad case. She is the first woman I ever spoke two civil words to. We met at a picnic along the Corniche Road, and she sat upon me so severely that I commenced to defend myself by showing that I was not such a surly brute as I looked. By Jove, in a week we were engaged."

The barrister indulged in a judicial frown.

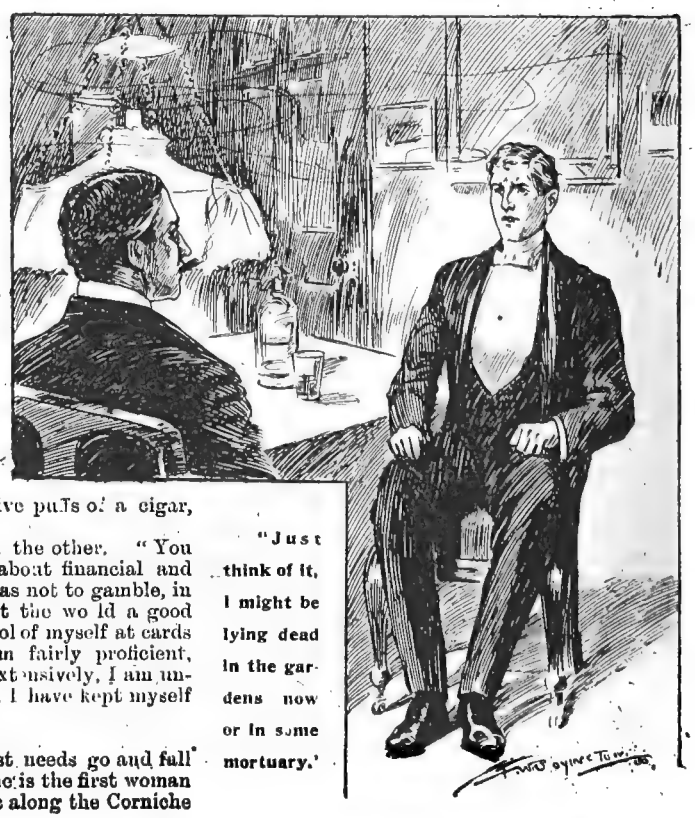
"No. It's none of your silly, sentimental affairs in which people part and meet months afterwards with polite inquiries after each other's health. I am not made that way; neither is Phil—Phyllis is her name, you know. This is for life. I am just bound up in her, and she would go through fire and water for me. But she is rich, the only daughter of a Midland ironmaster with tons of money. Her people are awfully nice, and I think they approve of me, though they have no idea that Phil and I are engaged."

He paused to gulp down a strong decoction of brandy and soda. The difficult part of his story was coming.

"You can quite believe," he continued, "that I did not want to ask her father, Sir William Browne—he was knighted by the Queen for his distinguished municipal services—to give his daughter to a chap who hadn't a cent. He supposes I am fairly well off, living as I do, and I can't bear acting under false pretences. I hate it like poison, though in this world a man often has to do what he doesn't like. However, this time I determined to act straight and above board. It was a very odd fact, but I just wanted £3,000 to enable me to make a move which, as I tell you, ought to result in a very fair sum of money, sufficient, at any rate, to render it a reasonable proposition for Phil and I to get married."

Brett was an appreciative listener. These love stories of real life are often so much more dramatic than the fictions of the novel or the stage.

"The opportunity came, to my mind, in this big tournament. I had no difficulty in getting odds of six or seven to one to far more than I was able to pay if I lost. Phil came into the scheme with me—she knows all about me, you



"Just think of it, I might be lying dead in the gardens now or in some mortuary.'

know—and we both regarded it as a certainty. Then the collapse came. She wanted to get the money from her mother to enable me to pay up, but I would not hear of it. I pretended that I could raise the wind some other way. The fact is I was wild with myself and with my luck generally. Then there was the disgrace of failing to settle on Monday, combined with the general excitement of that dream and a fearfully disturbed night. To make a long story short, I thought the best thing to do was to try a final plunge, and if it failed, to quit. I even took steps to make Phil believe I was a bad lot, so that she might not fret too much after me."

Mensmore's voice was a little unsteady in this last sentence. The barrister tried to cheer him by a little bit of raillery:

"I hope you have not succeeded too well?" he laughed.

"Oh, it is all right now. I mean that I left her some papers which would bring things to her knowledge that, unexplained by me, would give anyone a completely false impression."

The subject was evidently a painful one so Brett did not pursue it.

"About this speculation of yours," he said. "Are you sure it's all right and that you will not lose your money?"

"It is as certain as any business can be. It is a matter I thoroughly understand, but I will tell you all about it. If you will pardon me a moment I will bring you the papers, as I should like to have your advice, and it is early yet. You don't want to go to bed, I suppose?"

"Not for hours."

Mensmore rose, but before he reached the door a gentle tap heralded the appearance of a hall-porter.

"There is a letter for the gentleman. Monsieur is not in his room. He is reported to be here, so I bring it."

Mensmore took the note, read it with a smile and a growing flush, and handed it to the barrister, saying: "Under the circumstances I think you ought to see this. Isn't she a brick?"

The tiny missive ran:

DEAREST ONE,—You must forgive me, but we are both so miserable about that wretched money that I told mother everything. She likes you, and though she gave me a blowing-up, she has promised to give me £500 to-morrow. We can never thank her sufficiently. Do come round and see me for a minute. I will be in the verandah until eleven.—Ever yours, PHYLLIS.

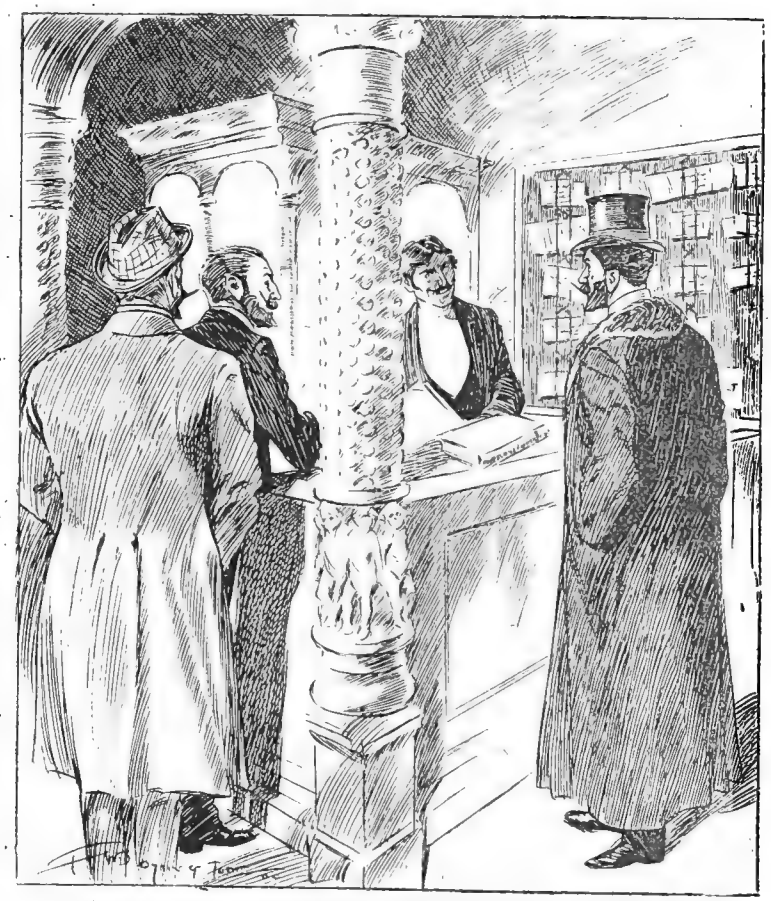
Reggie returned the note. "Luck! you're the luckiest fellow in the South of France. Why, here's the mother plotting with the daughter on your behalf. Sir William hasn't the ghost of a chance. Off you go to that blessed verandah."

When Mensmore had quitted the hotel Brett descended to the bureau to take up the threads of his neglected quest. The letter to Sydney H. Pyne was still unclaimed, and Brett thought he was justified in examining it. On the reverse of the envelope was the embossed stamp of an electric lighting company, so the contents were nothing more important than a bill.

An hour later Mensmore joined him in the billiard-room, radiant and excited:

"Great news," he said. "I squared everything with Lady Browne. Told her I was only chaffing Phil about the five hundred, because she spoilt my aim by shrieking out. Sir William has chartered a steam yacht to go for a three weeks' cruise along the Gulf of Genoa and the Italian coast. They have put him up to ask me in the morning to join the party. Great Scott! what a night I'm having!"

They parted soon after, and next morning Brett was informed that his friend had gone out early, leaving word that he had been summoned to breakfast at the Grand Hotel, where Sir William Browne was staying.



Other men came and asked for Pyne—sharp-featured men with imperials and long moustaches.

During the afternoon Mensmore came to him like a whirlwind. "We're off to-day," he said. "By the way, where shall I find you in London?"

Brett gave him his address, and Mensmore, handing him a card, said, "My permanent address is given here, the Orleans Club, St. James's. But I will look you up first. I shall be in town early in March. And you?"

"Oh, I shall be home much sooner. Good-bye, and don't let your good luck spoil you."

"No fear! Wait until you know Phyllis. She would keep any fellow all right once he got his chance, as I have done. Good-bye, and—and—God bless you!"

During the next three days the barrister devoted himself sedulously to the search for Pyne. He inquired in every possible and impossible place, but the man had utterly vanished.

Nor did he come to claim his letter at the Hotel du Cercle. As a matter of fact, it remained stuck on the baize-covered board until it was covered with dust, and the clerk at the bureau had grown weary of watching people who scrutinised the receptacle for their correspondence.

Others came and asked for Pyne—sharp-featured men with imperials and long moustaches—the interest taken in the man was great, but unrequited. He never appeared.

At last the season ended, the hotel was closed, and the mysterious letter was shot into the dustbin.

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SHORT STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE.

We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "Pirate Gold," by J. R. Hutchinson, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. R. Jenkins, Little Boys' Press, South Darenth, Kent. Attempts this week must deal with Stories about ANY SUBJECT, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, January 14th. Post-cards only, please.

Courting.

AT a certain school, during a lesson in parsing, the sentence, "Man courting in capacity of bliss," was given, and the word "courting" came to a little girl, aged thirteen, to parse.

She commenced hesitatingly, but got on very well until she had to say what it agreed with. There she stopped short. But as the teacher said:

"Come, what does courting agree w th?"

Janet blushed, and held down her head.

"Janet, don't you know what courting agrees with?"

"Ye-ye-yes, ma'am."

"Well, Janet, why don't you tell me?"

Blushing still more, and stammering, Janet at last blurted out:

"It agrees with all the girls, ma'am."

R. J.

Must Prepare for Tourists.

A CERTAIN village, whose ponds and lakes had not been frozen over for many years, was recently visited by a very sharp and severe frost which lasted several weeks.

All the water in the district was thickly covered with ice, which afforded a splendid opportunity for skating. Visitors from all the country round flocked to this spot attracted by the prospect of some good sport.

The majority of them came unprovided with skates, and consequently the sudden demand at the village store was enormous. At last, the store-keeper, who had never before heard of skates, tired of having to turn away intending purchasers, remarked to his wife:

"Mary, we'll have to get in a stock of these 'ere skates, for, if the demand is so great now, what will it be in the summer when the tourists come?"

A. R. H.

"I'll Wrestle wi' It."

A WELL-KNOWN Dean was presiding once at a dinner given to a number of the agriculturists in his parish, among whom were a number with unlimited capacity for the good things of the table.

The Dean had a quarter of a lamb set before him to carve, which he proceeded to do by cutting off the shoulder and placing it on a plate at his left hand.

A farm labourer sitting next to the Dean quietly surveyed the proceedings with a widely-opened mouth and dilated inc edulous eyes.

At last the man pulled closer, and with loud guffaw looked into the Dean's face, saying:

"Well, maister, it's a biggish bit, but I'll wrestle wi' it."

J. G. B.

Sleeping in Church.

SLEEPING in church is sometimes severely dealt with by old-fashioned ministers, but we doubt if any form of rebuke can equal in severity that of an Indian chaplain.

During the sermon his congregation had peacefully slumbered, but they did not know what was before them, for at its close the preacher sternly remarked:

"Brethren, as this sermon has caused me considerable labour to compose, and as scarcely anyone has remained awake to listen to it, I shall read it again!"

And he did.

A. R. S.

Caught in the Act.

ONE afternoon, when a gale of wind was raging, a gentleman in feeble health was struggling to reach his home, aided by his wife.

Just as they reached the corner of a street a huge chimney-pot was torn from the roof of a house by the wind, and dashed to the ground just in front of the gentleman and his wife.

"Good gracious!" cried the gentleman, "that was a narrow escape for us."

The two stopped for a moment to examine the chimney-pot—more dangerous in a high wind than a bombshell; but just as they were scrutinising it, a window near by was opened, a female head was thrust out, and in a shrill voice she shouted:

"You needn't think you're going to carry that off, because it belongs to my house."

R. A.

Why He Was Armed.

AN English resident in Ladysmith, who acknowledged a belief in fatalism, had occasion to take a journey on foot outside the town soon after it was relieved, and to prepare himself for the journey he strapped his rifle to his back.

A friend finding him thus armed when setting out on the journey, expressed surprise, and added:

"I thought you were of opinion that you would have to die when your turn came in spite of all you could do to prevent it. Why, then, carry a rifle?"

"Well, you see, I may meet an armed Boer," was the reply.

"But he will kill you if it is so ordained," urged the other.

"Yes, but don't you see," said the traveller drily, "it may be the Boer's turn to die!"

W. C.

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The Parson and the Billygoat.

A FEW years ago an old woman from Derbyshire paid a visit to some friends living at a distance, who on the Sunday she was staying with them persuaded her to accompany them to church.

Taking her seat in the gallery a distance from the pulpit, she appeared to listen very attentively to the sermon, when she suddenly began to weep.

At the close of the sermon the minister sent for her into the vestry.

"Now, my good woman, I saw you weeping. May I ask what part of my sermon so affected you?"

The old woman said:

"It wer none o' the sarmon that affected me, for I couldn't hear a word you said, but seeing thy jaws go wag wag, wag, and thy beard wobbling about, it made me think o' my auld billy goat as deid a fornit come Monday."

The interview terminated abruptly. C. S.

The Show was Not Postponed.

As most of our readers will remember, the Royal Agricultural Society's show was held at York during the past summer, the Prince of Wales, as President of the Society, attending.

As a whole, the inhabitants of the district were gratified by the Society's choice of a show-ground, but that there were exceptions, the following little incident proves:

Somebody suddenly discovered that the date of the Royal show clashed with that of another very important event—the village feast, to wit.

The matter was discussed with some warmth in the particular village referred to, and one aged inhabitant even went so far as to move a resolution on the subject.

"I moves," he remarked, "as this meetin' o' intelligent villagers protests agin this 'ere sneakin' of oor dates, an' that a letter be wrote to His R'yal 'Ighness axin' 'im to put off his show till oor feast's ower!"

J. R. T.

He Also Ran.

THE proprietor of a Birmingham restaurant advertised for a cook during the racing season.

The first to apply for the berth appeared to be very suitable. But before engaging him the restaurant keeper inquired if he could give him a tip for the "Derby."

The cook's eyes brightened.

He whispered a "dead cert," and mentioned that he had five shillings on the horse himself.

That was enough.

The proprietor gave him a lecture on the evils of betting, and showed him the door. As he went out he saw another man about to enter.

"Are you going to apply for the job?" he asked. "Well, if you're asked if you know anything about racing, say you can't tell a 'Derby' winner from a coster's donkey."

The man took the advice, was engaged, and commenced his duties.

Presently the proprietor rushed up to the speaking-tube, and yelled to the new cook:

"Calf's head one."

Instantly the reply came back:

"Did he, by George? Who came in second and third?"

L. J. W.

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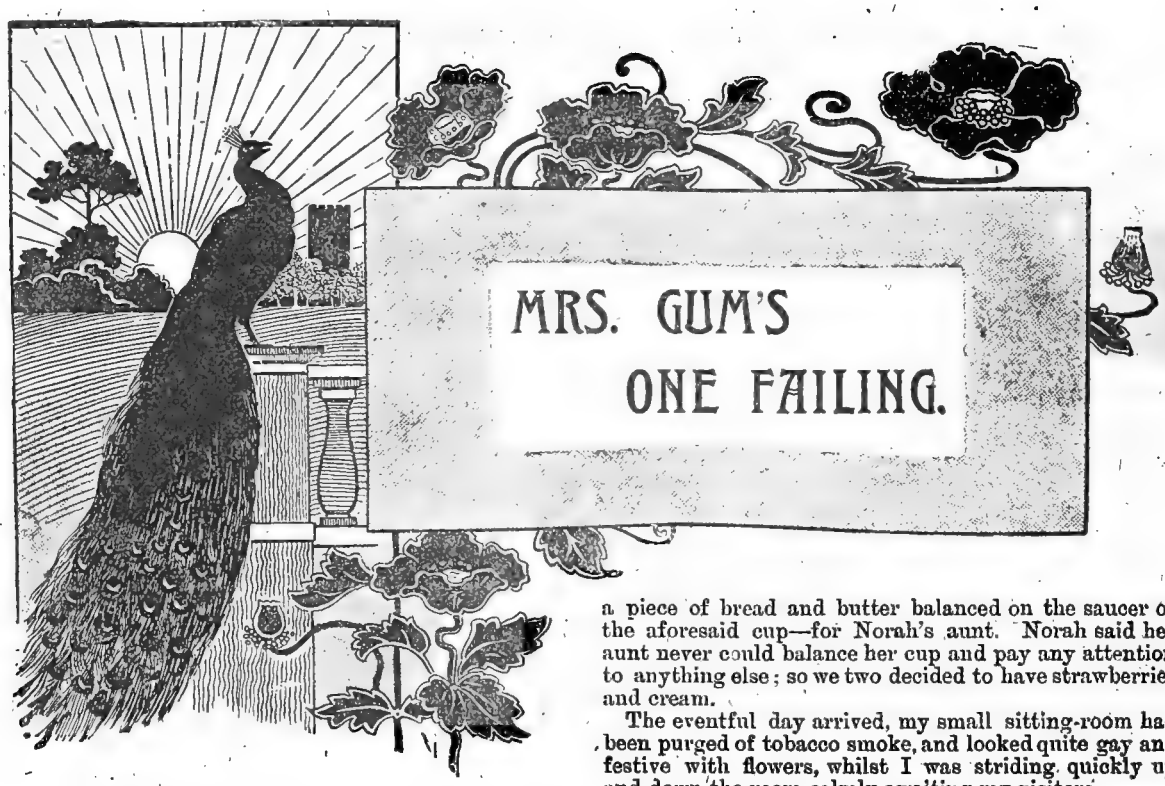

MRS. GUM'S ONE FAILING.

I DO not for a minute say that Mrs. Gum, my landlady, has not got good qualities, for she has a charm of manner that is pretty to behold, and her cooking leaves very little to be desired.

But what I do think is that Mrs. Gum might refrain from raking up my past history. She says that I bring back recollections of long ago to her mind; and then she gives me the benefit of them.

Just because Mrs. Gum happened at one period of her life to be my nurse, she believes that the greatest favour she can bestow upon me is to regale me with various anecdotes respecting my early doings, capabilities and attractions.

She will put the beer on the table with the remark that I was brought up on the bottle; or the butter-dish would be put in its place with the giddy information that I always would insist upon playing in the coalbox.

Now highly exciting as these infantile titbits may be at first they soon begin to pall upon one; and I believe that a prolonged course would, in the end, drive one to drink and crime.

Matters reached a climax one day when two lady friends of mine came to take tea with me.

One of the lady friends was young and the other was her aunt.

I had been thinking about this little tea party for some time, for Norah had promised to persuade her aunt to come.

Thinking to give Norah's aunt a treat I had spent a great deal of time finding out from Norah the especial kind of delicacy she liked to assimilate at tea.

After much discussion, which occupied several hours a day for a week beforehand, we decided on a small cup of tea with balanced bread and butter—that is to say a piece of bread and butter balanced on the saucer of the aforesaid cup—for Norah's aunt. Norah said her aunt never could balance her cup and pay any attention to anything else; so we two decided to have strawberries and cream.

The eventful day arrived, my small sitting-room had been purged of tobacco smoke, and looked quite gay and festive with flowers, whilst I was striding quickly up and down the room calmly awaiting my visitors.

Norah's aunt's name was Mrs. Bray, and Mrs. Gum dropped her a curtsy. I felt at the time that I ought to follow Mrs. Gum's example, but I am glad now I didn't.

To tell the truth I felt like dropping on the floor altogether, but, as I said, I'm glad I didn't.

Now everything went on swimmingly until Mrs. Gum began to purr.

I must have seemed very happy and I suppose Mrs. Gum had noticed the fact.

Tears began to come into Mrs. Gum's eyes and I knew that that was a sure sign that she was going to purr.

At first I could hear her purring to herself, "What a dear, fat baby he was, bless him. Brought up on the bottle, too," and so on and so on until Mrs. Gum, carried away by her emotions, uttered aloud the appalling remark: "Eh, but you was always fond of the girls Master Harry, bless your heart!"

Mrs. Bray dropped the cup of tea Mrs. Gum had given to her a couple of minutes before, and I sat upon mine, which I had put down whilst I handed some strawberries to Norah.

Of course I felt I ought to explain and that only made Norah laugh the more.

I don't know how that tea-party finished. I have not the slightest recollection of anything beyond the fact that after my visitors had gone I buried my head in the cushions upon the sofa and kicked for half-an-hour.

The worst of it was that I could not make Mrs. Gum see the enormity of her offence; and the only way I saw of weaning Mrs. Gum from her vice was to set about giving her other things to think of.

So I thereupon determined to give Mrs. Gum food for reflection in the shape of chemistry.

I thought it might do her good, cultivate her intellect, and help her mind from relapsing into ancient history.

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It was with these good intentions that I one day made the remark in most solemn tones:—

"Mrs. Gum, perhaps you are not aware that this water is an oxide of hydrogen!"

Mrs. Gum dropped a fork in her alarm and stared at the water jug I held.

"Well, sir," she said, "you do surprise me. I only drawed it fresh this morning and put it in the filter, sir, I do assure you."

I put the jug down and she immediately clutched it and held it up to the light.

"You don't understand me, Mrs. Gum. I am not finding fault with the water; but what I wished to tell you was that water is composed of oxygen and hydrogen. That, Mrs. Gum," I continued "is a fact known to all the leading scientists of the day."

"Lor', sir, you don't say so! Well, there's no telling what we eat and drink now-a-days. I suppose it's them water companies as has done it, sir."

"Done what, Mrs. Gum?" I asked.

"Put them things in what you said, sir, for I never heard tell of 'em being in afore."

"I am afraid, Mrs. Gum, that you still misunderstand me. Hydrogen and oxygen are gases, and these gases are in that water there on the table, in a state of combination. Now, do I make myself clear?"

"Well, I never heard the like, sir. I've heard of 'em putting water in the gas to make it burn proper, but as for 'em putting gas in water, it do beat all. Isn't it bad for the innards, sir?"

"You have not grasped it yet, Mrs. Gum," I replied. "There are other gases than coal gas, and the two I have named unite to form water. When either of them, Mrs. Gum, burns in an atmosphere of the other, water is the result. Now, do you understand me?"

Mrs. Gum looked at me and began to smile.

"It's one of your jokes, sir. You always was one for jokes."

I frowned; my whole system revolted at the idea. I looked sternly at Mrs. Gum and said quietly yet distinctly:

"Mrs. Gum, you have made a great mistake. Levity and chemistry are antipodal."

"Oh! it is some of your chemicals is it, sir?" said Mrs. Gum with a sudden look of intelligence.

"What I told you, Mrs. Gum, was a fact discovered by Cavendish and interpreted by Lavoisier, both of whom were eminent chemists."

"I know of a tobacco called Cavendish, it's what my poor husband used to smoke. What was the other gentleman's name, sir?"

"Lavoisier, a Frenchman," I replied.

"I'd a deal rather have English ones myself, sir, as you never knows what them furriners puts in their pills. Not as that I troubles 'em much, sir, never being much poorly and a drop of senna tea last thing sets me as right as never was."

"We are getting farther from the point, Mrs. Gum," said I, returning once more to the attack in the interests of science, "I don't think you quite understand yet that that water on the table——"

"Shall I bring you a bottle of beer, sir, and throw the water away?" interrupted Mrs. Gum. It must have been the heavy rain we have had as has done it."

I looked at Mrs. Gum, sighed and said:

"Bring two bottles of beer Mrs. Gum, I feel I need two at least."

That was my first and last attempt to cultivate Mrs. Gum's mind.

It took me a quarter of an hour explaining to the plumber I found at work next day ripping up sundry boards and pipes, that there *was* no escape of gas, and that I had never said the gas *was* escaping into the water.

Although I paid that plumber half-a-crown for loss of time, I still think he looks upon me as a kind of confirmed idiot. I told Norah that I had been trying to lead Mrs. Gum into the paths of rectitude; but she only laughed at me and said that Mrs. Gum was a dear old soul and that I was a silly fellow.

I tried to balance up that statement but couldn't; nor could I understand why Norah and Mrs. Gum kissed each other so much whenever they met.

I often used to wish that Norah would feel what I felt when Mrs. Gum besmirched my fair name with past history.

Happy was the day when that wish was fulfilled.

I remember the day well by reason of an appointment I had that I felt I must keep. I was to be married.

Norah was there and so was Mrs. Gum.

As I went up the aisle I heard Mrs. Gum distinctly remark "Brought up on the bottle he was, bless his little heart!"

But it was when all was over and we were about to set off for the station that Mrs. Gum really became most original.

"It is not you I'll be dandling on my knee next Mister Harry, lor' bless both of you," said Mrs. Gum.

Then we drove off and the last glimpse I had that day of Mrs. Gum showed her to me with tears streaming down her dear old face, but happy and smiling.

W. ST. G. DRENNAN.

A £10 Note for a Single Word.

THE word we want from you is simply the title of a new paper we shall publish in the early spring.

The title of this paper must be expressed in one word. The shorter, the easier, and the more expressive, the better.

It is necessary, of course, in order that you may choose the best title, for you to know something about the proposed paper.

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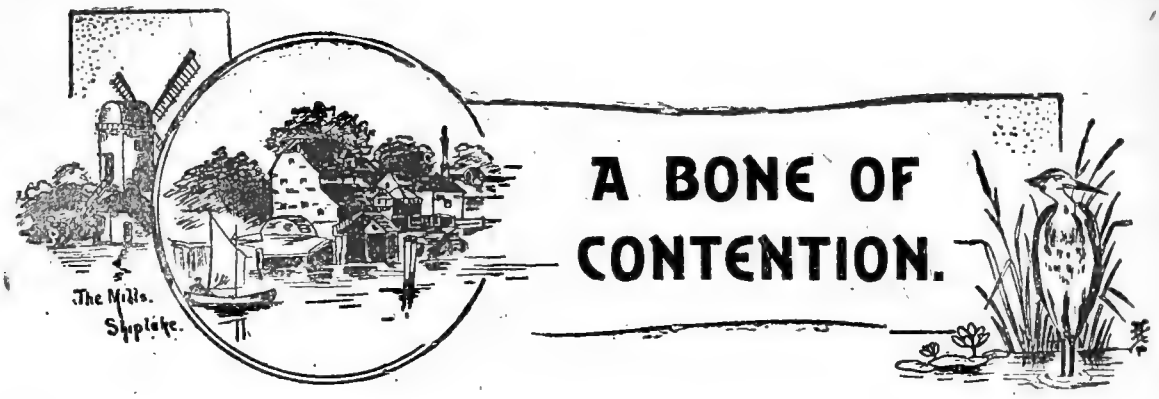

A BONE OF CONTENTION.

THE first baby is not generally supposed to be a bone of contention. On the contrary it is, as a rule, considered a bond of union between its parents. Strange, however, to say, this was not the case with Captain Grant, of the 15th Hussars, and his wife. Indeed it nearly caused an estrangement, and it certainly had to answer for the only quarrel they ever had.

There is no doubt that when the infant first made its appearance, Jack Grant was as fond and proud a father as could be found in the United Kingdom.

He tried to see the numerous likenesses to various relatives which his wife discovered in their son; he persuaded himself he felt highly flattered when she declared she saw in the somewhat plain infant a strong look of himself; and finally wound himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, he actually made an awkward attempt to hold the child, and even impressed a fatherly kiss on its small, mottled, red face.

This was a very happy state of affairs so long as it lasted, but unfortunately a change was soon to be observed.

Captain Grant began to wish his wife could find some other subject on which to exercise her conversational powers than "the baby;" he also commenced to wonder if it were necessary to talk to the child in the senseless and extremely odd style which she and the nurse invariably used when they addressed it.

At last he was obliged to confess to himself that unnatural as it seemed, he occasionally found his boy, in spite of his numerous perfections, a decided bore.

"You see," he confided to his chum, Jim Reeves, "a fellow gets so awfully sick of hearing nothing but agoo-and agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble-bubble, which is the way my wife and the nurse always speak to the poor little brat. I can't get the idiotic rubbish out of my head; and upon my word, when some of the fellows the other day at the mess were talking of the new regulations that have just come out, and asked me what I thought of them, I was as near as possible making a consummate ass of myself before them all, by answering; 'Agoo-and agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble-bubble.' I assure you I was within an ace of doing so. If I could have a little sensible conversation with my wife when the child had been put to bed, it would not be so bad, but sleeping or waking 'the baby' occupies all the attention. I am supposed to be violently excited to hear of the 'heavenly, sweet smile' that came over the brat's face when he saw his bottle being brought to him, or that he managed to crawl three more inches on the ground, or something else that appears to me equally uninteresting. It's really awfully rough on a fellow."

"Rather trying," remarked his friend sympathetically.

"Trying," repeated Jack. "That is not the word for it. I declare it makes me so irritable, I sometimes feel inclined to swear at them all round, the baby included."

"Come," answered Jim, reprovingly, "I call that unfair. What! swear at a helpless infant, whose only method of retort and strongest language for some time to come will be 'a-goo' and 'a-bubble.' That is fighting upon unequal terms with a vengeance."

"Oh, if you are going to chaff me I'll shut up," replied Jack testily, "I only wish you were bothered by the same sort of thing, and then I don't think you would find it so amusing," saying which he turned on his heel and walked away in a huff.

It was in this unsatisfactory frame of mind regarding his first-born, that Jack proceeded to wend his way home one cold winter's afternoon a short time after Christmas. He had had a hard day's work, and was looking forward with a feeling of relief to a chat with his wife and a cigar before dinner. True his mind was somewhat disturbed by the thought that it was possible the *tête-à-tête* he anticipated might be broken into by the presence of a third party. But he resolutely shook off this gloomy foreboding, and walked on briskly towards his destination.

On arriving there and hearing his wife's voice somewhere overhead, he called out to her he was home, and was going to the smoking-room, where he would be glad of her company until it was time to dress for dinner.

"Very well, dear," she answered brightly, "we'll come in a minute."

"We!" said Jack to himself, "who else is she bringing? Surely it can't be the child. She can never mean to turn this room, as well as every other in the house, into a nursery. Hang it all, that would really be unbearable."

If, however, he had any doubts on the subject, they were soon to be dispelled, for he had hardly lit his cigar before his wife made her appearance with the baby in her arms.

"Well," thought Jack, resigned, "I suppose there is nothing for it but to grin and bear it."

"Now, Jack, my dearest," exclaimed his wife gushingly. "I have such a piece of news for you. You will never guess what it is. It is something almost too delightful for words."

"I also have something to tell you," broke in Jack, as his wife paused to take breath, for he felt instinctively

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that the important news his wife referred to had something to do with his off-spring, and he knew that once that all-absorbing subject was started all other topics of conversation would be inevitably banished for the time being. "I also have something to tell you. I met Chalmers to-day; he is staying here for a few days with his cousin, so I asked him to come and dine with us some time next week, and I think we might invite one or two people to meet him. Now, on what day do you think we had better ask him, and who else shall we have?"

"I will think about it in a minute," answered his little wife eagerly, "but I must tell you my news first. Fancy! Baby is getting a tooth, and he is only just four months old!"

"That's capital," said Jack, in a voice intended to express unlimited delight. "There is no doubt that the little fellow is very well on for his age. I should think now he will be trotting about all over the place before we know where we are."

"I don't think I should feel I was doing my duty by him if I allowed him to do such a thing, even if he could," replied his wife severely. "I don't know if you are particularly anxious to see your child grow up bandy legged. I can't say I am."

"Ah, yes, I forgot he is rather weak in the legs at present," remarked Jack in a crestfallen voice. "But, May," he continued, more cheerfully, feeling he had done his duty bravely, and nothing more could be expected of him for the present, "what about having Chalmers?"

"Let me see," said May, thoughtfully. Then appealing to the baby, "What does 'oo think, my pretty? Agoo-and-agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble——"

"Come," said Jack, a little impatiently, "try to arrange something, as Chalmers is only here for a few days, and I want you to write to him to-night."

"Must we tink, my sweet?" continued May, apparently oblivious of everything but the existence of her son, and only half-hearing her husband's last remark. "Must we tink, my beauty? Well, then, agoo-and-agoo-and-a-bub——"

"For Heaven's sake try for one moment to attend to what I am saying," said Jack sharply. "I won't trouble you long, and then you will be at liberty to return to your very intellectual conversation with the child."

This time, May took in what her husband said, but being annoyed at the way he had spoken she determinedly took no notice of his request, but, staring absently into the fire, went on talking to her baby.

"Yes, my own own, does your pretty papa want——"

"Confound it!" exclaimed poor, tired Jack angrily, "do you want to drive me mad with your infernal nonsense? I have never yet been considered pretty, nor have I any wish to be called so at this time of my life. Can't you find a more suitable adjective to apply to me than that."

"Indeed I can," returned May, losing her temper in her turn, "cross, ill-tempered, rude, unnatural, cruel, are all the words which may be applied to you in your present state of mind."

"Well, I am sure I am not surprised," retorted Jack, "the only wonder is I don't go off my head with hearing the flow of absurd nonsense that seems to me to go on, morning, noon and night."

"If you call talking to one's own child absurd nonsense, I don't," said May, with a great assumption of maternal dignity.

"I must say that it never struck me that you intended

IF YOU HAD PLENTY OF MONEY.

"Thanks to your great generosity in sending me that five thousand pounds I now have plenty of money in my pocket; and am free from the worries and trials of poverty, from which I had suffered so long."

There! if you had reason to write to a man in *that* way what a thing it would be, the money, and your gratitude to him who furnished it in the day of your dire need.

The writer will make no silly pretence of not caring for money. He does care for it, and so do all men and women of sound minds. For money represents about everything in this world worth having, except good health, and in a way money has a deal to do with that.

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"In the Spring of 1897 I found my health giving way. My skin turned dull and sallow, and the whites of my eyes actually got as yellow as an old gold coin. Of course you will understand what ailed me; it was biliousness, one of the commonest and meanest of all the ailments that make a man feel like getting down on all fours and doing a crawl.

"My right side, down where the liver is, was so sore I couldn't bear to touch it. When I ate a bit to keep myself from starving, I had such pains in the chest and back I wished I had let food alone; and if there had been a stone weight tied against my chest I couldn't have felt much worse in that region than I did as it was.

"The taste in my mouth was horrible; it almost made me sick. All my strength seemed leaving me, and when I got home at night from work I was so weary and fagged I had to lie down; and now and then I was obliged to leave off work for days.

"Some of my neighbours thought I was going off in a consumption, I got so weak and so thin and used to spit up such a lot of phlegm when I coughed.

"I spent pounds on doctors and their medicines, and but for Mother Seigel's Syrup I don't know what would have become of me. I had been ill fifteen months and am sure I couldn't have stood it much longer.

"The very first bottle of Seigel's Syrup gave me great relief, and the improvement went on until I was strong and well again. Now I have a good appetite and whatever I eat agrees with me.

"I owe my present health to Seigel's Syrup and no amount of money could have given me the comfort and contentment which resulted from the use of that splendid medicine. You are at liberty to publish my statement."—W. J. Scuffins, April 9th, 1900.

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to talk, I thought it was mere babbling, but of course that may be my ignorance. Perhaps you will be kind enough to enlighten me as to the meaning of that much-used word—agoo."

"I shall do no such thing, for I can see that you are sneering both at me and my child. I must say for a man who sets up to be a gentleman, it is an extremely curious way of behaving. I confess I should never have thought you capable of speaking to me in the way you have."

"For goodness' sake don't preach; I am much too tired to listen."

"Very well, then, if my conversation bores you, I most certainly won't remain here any longer," saying which May walked out of the room looking very injured, and kissing her son as she went, murmuring tenderly, "At any rate, your *mother* loves you, you darling."

In spite, however, of the satisfaction of having enjoyed the last word, as she carried baby to the nursery May felt a very queer feeling in her throat, and seemed to have developed a cold in her head, in a remarkably short space of time.

Having left baby in Nurse's charge, and much to that worthy woman's astonishment, having parted from him without any of those little endearments she was wont to use to him before doing so, she proceeded straight to her room.

"Well, I never did," exclaimed Nurse, using that phrase so much beloved by the lower orders of society, which says so little, but is intended to convey so much. "I never did! To think she should leave her first-born without so much as a parting blessing! Never mind my sweety, if your mother forsakes you, your old nurse never will. No thank 'eaven, I tries to do my dooty by you, my hangel, and nought shall tempt my soul to go astray," and then having delivered herself of these lofty and truly elevating sentiments, *a propos* of nothing in particular, she proceeded to undress and bath the infant, feeling in that virtuous frame of mind we all enjoy when we have been saying anything *very* righteous and moral, whatever our acts may be.

In the meanwhile, the unfortunate object of Nurse's displeasure was sitting in her room, weeping bitterly, all her dignity and temper washed away in tears. It must be acknowledged that it was some time before May arrived at this state of penitence. At first she could think of nothing but the contempt with which she considered Jack had treated her son; it was this, she told herself, that wounded her, even more than the way he had spoken to her.

He had not kissed it when he came in, had expressed no desire to look at its mouth and judge for himself as to whether the tooth would be long in coming (which was what anyone with even a moderate share of fatherly feeling would have done), and, in fact, he had behaved disgracefully.

"Yes, disgracefully," she repeated to herself, as she sat by her window looking out into the winter's gloom, with flushed cheeks and eyes full of angry tears, which she was too proud to let fall, "disgracefully; and so I shall tell him when I see him."

By-and-bye, however, her anger began to vanish, and her reflections with regard to Jack were of a milder description. Had she not been a little hasty with him? After all, might he not, perhaps, have reason to complain?

Of course, it was difficult to understand anyone being bored by Baby, with his funny little ways and odd little chuckle; but still, what had her dear old mother said, when she had told her of her plan of bringing him up from his earliest infancy to be a great companion to his father, so that he should learn as soon as possible to enter into all his parent's plans?

"Take care, my dear," had been her mother's words, "that you don't give Jack too much of a good thing."

Well, she had laughed at the time, but was there not some truth in the advice? Perhaps poor Jack had come home tired, quite worn-out, and in no humour for Baby's company, so no wonder he had been a little impatient. There was no doubt he was really very good-tempered; he could not have been feeling so bright as usual, or he would not have been annoyed. It was all her fault for teasing him with her nonsense, and she ought to be ashamed of herself.

Yes, his health was rapidly being ruined, and it was entirely her own doing; upon which, having arrived at this melancholy conclusion, she could no longer restrain her grief, but burst into a flood of tears.

It was at this stage of the proceedings, and while she was sobbing most vehemently, she felt her husband's strong arms round her, as he said gently:

"Don't cry little woman. I'm awfully sorry for all I said."

Then as she looked up at him with a loving though rather watery smile, he continued regretfully:

"I can't think what made me behave to you as I did. I know I was an awful brute, but I was not feeling very fit; not that that is any excuse for the way I spoke to you. But please forgive me, darling."

May's answer to this somewhat incoherent speech was to throw her arms round Jack's neck and give him a good hug, as she said impulsively:

"Why, Jack, I want you to forgive me. I am so sorry I lost my temper."

"My dear, you have no reason to apologise," he replied. "I am sure I wonder you did not give it to me hot as I deserved, and it is only because you are the dearest little girl that ever lived that you did not do so. But let us forget the unpleasant business and kiss and be friends," saying which he suited the action to the word, and the reconciliation was complete.

The only thing that now remained to be done was to pay a visit to the cause of all the trouble, and this was not forgotten, as after a minute or two May and Jack proceeded to the nursery, and, as baby happened to be enjoying his bottle, he chanced to be in a very good temper.

Accordingly, when he saw his parents, he condescended to look up for a moment from his meal, and give them a most amiable smile—a little rapid, perhaps, but still very well-meaning, so that nothing was wanting to complete the family felicity.

After this little episode everything went considerably more smoothly, May realised that a man of thirty and an infant of four months are not very congenial companions, seeing that they can hardly be said to have many ideas in common, and that the former decidedly objects to be deserted for the latter; whilst Jack on his part began to comprehend what an unfailing source of interest and amusement a baby is to womankind in general, and its mother in particular, and so learnt to make allowances for the raptures with which his wife viewed their child. Having arrived, therefore, at a better understanding on the subject, it never again caused any trouble, and if you were now to ask his parents about him, they would tell you that since that time Baby had never been anything to them but a bond of union.

E. K. H.

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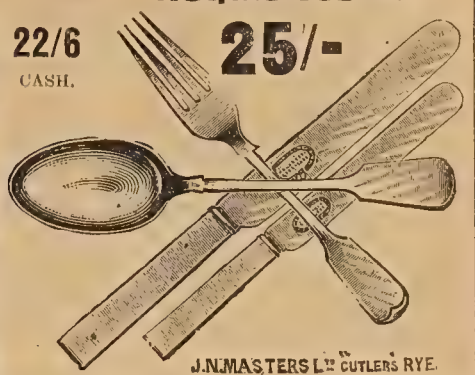

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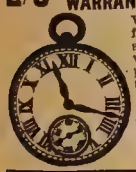

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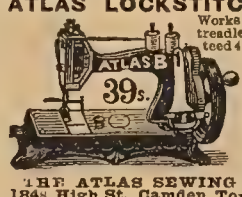

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The Fox Kettle.

On the beautiful shores of the Bay of Odawarra there lived, many years ago, a young couple. The man was out with the boats fishing for the greater part of the week, whilst his wife strove to make some little addition to their precarious income by the sale of fruits and sweetmeats to travellers.

The fisherman was an honest, sober, hard-working fellow enough, but he had one great fault, and that was a rooted disrespect for the gods of his country.

"What good are they to us?" he would say to his wife, "I may kneel until my legs are sore, I may pray until my voice is hoarse, but for all that the gods don't send the fish into my nets, and I don't see that we get any the better off for all my devotions!"

His wife, who was a soft-speaking, gentle-minded woman always reproached him for the contempt with which he treated the gods, and would answer:

"Nay, Kikuchi, we have health and strength, and surely they are of far more worth than all the riches of the world."

They were sitting one evening over the charcoal brasier, the children were playing on the beach outside, and the kettle was boiling merrily. Suddenly the charcoal shifted, the kettle overturned, scalded the woman's hand, and put out the fire. Kikuchi, who had met with but poor sport during the day, and who was not in the best of humours, broke out into a towering passion, seized the kettle, and flung it out on to the beach.

"Ever since I bought this horrid thing," he cried, "it has done nothing but give us trouble, so there it goes, and we'll get a new one," and he ran out and kicked the kettle angrily about until it disappeared in the waves.

When he returned he found his wife in an agony of tears.

"What is the matter, O'Hana?" he asked.

O'Hana did not reply but merely pointed to a dark corner of the room. Kikuchi looked and saw a large fox staring at him with his red, sparkling eyes.

Seizing a wooden wine measure, he hurled it at the intruder, but the animal was too quick, and the missile crashed through the paper window into the street.

"Oh, Kikuchi, Kikuchi! what have you done?" cried O'Hana. "You've driven Kitsune away!"

Here it should be explained that the fox is held in universal reverence by the Japanese people. The god, Inari, patron of rice, fish, and daily food, is especially fond of assuming the guise of the fox, and his appearance is looked upon, according to circumstances, as a good or evil omen.

"Well, what do I care?" retorted Kikuchi, gulping down a cup of wine, "What do I care for an ugly, red-eyed, prying fox? You believe he's a god, but I know better, and I only wish the thing had hit him."

But O'Hana was very sorrowful for the rest of the evening, and retired to bed with her children earlier than usual.

That night Kikuchi had a terrible dream. The kettle appeared in a flame of fire, and out of the spout a huge fox-brush. It remained at the foot of his quilt all the night, and seemed to glare at him with a couple of large red eyes.

During the next day his eldest boy, a bouncing youngster of seven, sickened. The doctor was called in. He examined the patient's eyelids, and asked: "Have you been quarrelling lately?"

Both husband and wife answered: "No."

"Have you been drinking too much?"

"No."

"Has anything out of the way happened lately?"

"Nothing in particular," said Kikuchi, "I was in a bit of a temper last evening with my old kettle, and kicked it away."

"Kicked a kettle away!" said the doctor, "that's a bad thing to do, for Kitsune is very fond of kettles. I thought that the child must have a devil, so if he takes a little Furidashi, and these twelve pills every half-hour with hot water, he will get over it."

The anxious parents tried the Furidashi and the pills, but with no beneficial effect, for the poor little fellow grew worse and worse. The last remedy was tried—the swallowing of the holy picture worn round every child's neck, dissolved in hot water, but with no success, for he died.

Still, Kikuchi was not convinced that he had done wrong, but continued to rail at the gods in general and at Kitsune in particular, in the wildest manner. The weird apparition still haunted him at nights, his fishing produced nothing, no travellers stopped to buy O'Hana's fruit, and everything went to rack and ruin. Then O'Hana resolved that she would go to the shrine of Inari on the hillside. So, when the moon rose behind the tall, black pine trees, she crept softly away unobserved by her husband, and knelt at the shrine of the god.

"O, Kitsune!" she said, with the tears streaming from her eyes, "I am in great distress. Help me!"

A blaze of light appeared in the shrine, and in the midst of it she saw the great fox god. He looked at her for a moment with kindling eyes, and merely said:

"Find the kettle!" and disappeared.

As she descended the rough path she saw a red glare in the heavens. A terrible thought came across her mind, and, alas, when she arrived at the village she beheld her house in flames, Kikuchi and her children standing outside, and in the midst of the flames was the fox, crying out:

"The kettle! The kettle!"

Kind neighbours sheltered the homeless family for the night. O'Hana told Kikuchi all she had seen, and they started out to find the kettle.

Along the shore, through the village, on the high road, even to the great town they went, and at last in an old iron shop they found the kettle, much battered and bruised. Tenderly they wrapped it up and carried it back to the village: there they polished it, mended up the holes which had been made in its sides, and together they went to the shrine of Inari.

The god appeared as he had appeared to O'Hana, and in terrible tones he said:

"Kikuchi learn from this lesson never to mock at the gods, go and sin no more."

And Kikuchi mended his ways, religiously kept the kettle clean and burnished, paid his devotions twice a day at the shrine of Inari, and was rewarded by continual happiness and prosperity.

Frank Abell.

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MORE ABOUT

Mr. HALL CAINE'S

NEW NOVEL.

In our last issue we made an announcement which has doubtless been received with much satisfaction by the readers of *SHORT STORIES.* We were in the happy position of being able to announce the fact that we had been fortunate enough to secure the serial rights of Mr. Hall Caine's New Novel, and that it would appear exclusively in the pages of our new Magazine for Ladies which will appear on January 10th next.

"THE ETERNAL CITY" is one of those deeply engrossing stories which seem to hold the attention from first to last. Like most, one might say all, that this popular Novelist has written, this new work is of intense human interest; it is a story which will be much talked about, and doubtless there will be no little controversy on its account, but all will admit that underlying it are problems of vital importance to humanity, problems which have through the ages engaged the earnest thought of all social reformers.

As in "The Christian," there is a romantic side to "THE ETERNAL CITY." We think it will be generally acknowledged when this story is given in full, that it is the finest thing Mr. Hall Caine has yet written, and those who have read any of his works will know that that is saying a good deal.

Remember, there will be a large instalment in the first issue of "THE LADY'S MAGAZINE," which will be on sale on January 10th. Order at once, as there will only be a limited edition.

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PEARSON'S WEEKLY

FOOTBALL CLUB PICTURES.

1st Prize - - £50 in Gold.

SECOND LIST

2nd Prize - - - - £10 Note
3rd, 4th, and 5th Prizes - 3 £5 Notes
6th to 20th Prizes - 15 Sovereigns
21st to 40th Prizes - 20 Half-Sovs.

If you cannot find all the names, ask your friends to help you.

Below will be found ten pictures; each picture representing the name of a football club.

If you look at the picture in the margin you will see that the name is Blackburn Rovers. What are the other names?

All you have to do is to write underneath each picture, in the space provided, the name of the club you believe the picture to represent. The names are those of both Rugby and Association clubs. Keep your list by you till another has appeared.

Where the names of two clubs embody that of the same town, but with a different addition, the full title is indicated in the picture.

The prizes will be paid to the competitors from whom we receive the correct, or most nearly correct, solutions.

No more than one prize will go to any competitor.

Example.

Blackburn Rovers.

It must be taken as a condition of the competition that anybody competing therein agrees to abide by the Editor's final decision.

Intending competitors in the above would do well to procure a copy of "The Football Who's Who," which contains the names of most of the big clubs. This book will be found of great service in discovering the names depicted. It only costs a shilling, and may be obtained of all booksellers, and post free for 1s. 3d. from the publisher, 17 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

No. 11.....

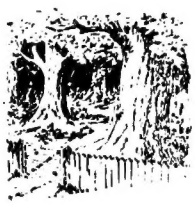
No. 12.....

No. 13.....

No. 14.....

No. 15.....

No. 16.....



No. 17.....

No. 18.....

No. 19.....

No. 20.....

I send in this coupon as a competitor for the prize advertised in this paper, and subject to the conditions printed on this page:

Name and address.....

THINGS TO REMEMBER.

1. Coupons may be sent either from "Pearson's Weekly" or "Short Stories."
2. Do not send in your coupons till we tell you.
3. All coupons are sent at senders' risk, and if they go astray, from whatever cause, we do not accept responsibility.
4. Competitors must attach their private address to their attempts. No prize will be sent to any post-office, refreshment rooms, or other places at which letters are called for. Attempts bearing such addresses will be disqualified.

Printed by HORACE COX, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON Limited, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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RESCUED FROM DRINK

Heroic Work of a Girl in Saving Her Brother from Drunkenness.

Put a Remedy in His Coffee and Without His Knowledge of the Secret Was Completely Cured.

The terrible evil of drunkenness has at last found a conqueror. Miss Mary Roberts, of 1033 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Cal., U.S.A., will gladly tell any lady who will write her how

she saved her brother from ruin, and her words burn with a new hope to every woman who would rescue a son, brother, or husband from the scourge of drunkenness.

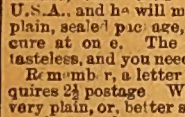
"May every mother, sister, or daughter learn from my experience, is my devout hope, and in thus making public the story of our private misfortune and subsequent blessings it is my earnest desire that every woman read in my words the way to happiness, not only for herself but for the man who is struggling with the curse of liquor upon him. Dr. Haines, who discovered Golden Specific, is deserving of woman's homage, and I am glad to know that he will send a free trial package of the remedy to every woman who writes him.

"Send your name and address to Dr. J. W. Haines, 3243 Glen Bldgs., Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A., and he will mail the remedy to you in a plain, sealed package, and thus you can begin the cure at once. The remedy is odorless and tasteless, and you need have no fear of discovery."

Remember, a letter to us from British Isles requires 2½ postage. Write your name and address very plain, or, better still, enclose a self-addressed envelope so there can be no mistake in delivery.

SPECIAL OFFER TO READERS OF "SHORT STORIES."

GOLD CLUSTER RING (Stamped)



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Send size of finger.

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"TATCHO" acts as an invigorating tonic. It stops the hair falling, creates a luxuriant growth, and imparts to it a bright and youthful lustre.

"When I discovered the preparation, I found that I had hit upon a remedy capable of working wonders," said Mr. George R. Sims to the representative of the *Daily Mail*. "Look at my hair now. Look at the colour. In time people got to know. Then the trouble began.

"Letters in thousands poured in to me from men and women in every quarter of the world, from all parts of the Kingdom, from America, India, Africa, China, and Australia. The work of answering the letters was enormous, and as far as possible the desired information was supplied; but it became quite evident that at the rate at which the demand was increasing I should very soon need a large staff of clerks to attend solely to the Hair renewer department of correspondence.

"In consequence, I said to myself. Why should this thing go on? If the public wants my hair renewer, the public shall have it; but the demand must be met in the ordinary business-like way. So I resolved to place the genuine article within reach of all, and with the assistance of a number of gentlemen, possessing the necessary commercial facilities, that has been accomplished."

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COUPON.
S.S.
Jan. 12, 1901.

If you are desirous of participating in this distribution cut out this Coupon and send it to the Geo. R. Sims Co., 81c Great Queen Street, London, W.C., accompanied by a postal order for 1/10. You will receive by return of post a plain package containing

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